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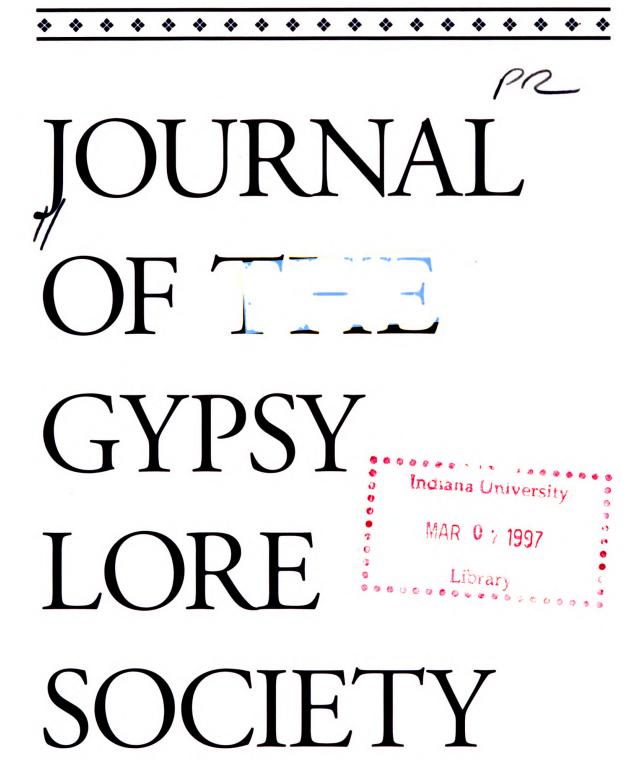
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JOURNAL OF THE GYPSY LORE SOCIETY

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Sheila Salo, Editor

Editorial board Victor A. Friedman, Matt T. Salo, Carol Silverman, Anita Volland

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Luck: How Machvaia Make It and Keep It

Carol Miller

The Machvaia Roma of California believe everything has the potential for some kind of power and how these powers will be experienced depends upon the nature of one's luck (baX). To make the most of the luck they have been given at birth, they say it is best to stick with Roma customs and values (romania). But luck is conceived of as fluid, subject to transfer by contact, and primed for increase in either the better or worse direction. Putting this volatility to productive use involves traveling, matching good with good, and paying attention to whatever feels right and lucky.

Introduction

To me the most intriguing thing about the Machvaia Roma of California is how they have managed to persist for a thousand years as a viable culture. Adapting to a phenomenal number and variety of circumstances, beginning in India, moving west, to the north, to Serbia, and arriving in America, they are their own best evidence of a genius for survival, selective borrowing—a term that has fallen out of fashion—and cultural stamina. What, one might ask, is the character and structure of a society so agreeably compliant to diversity and yet so resistant to assimilation? In this regard, the following discussion about how luck is made and kept provides some suggestions.

My fieldwork! with the Machvaia points to a singular degree of in-group identity and ethnic isolation. For a number of penalizing reasons including the threat of disease, the important belief system concerning *marime* 'defilement' (Miller 1975) forbids intimate association with outsiders, particularly those of the opposite sex. The belief system regarding *pachiv* 'respect' (Miller 1995) denies that outsiders

Carol Miller is a member of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars and an anthropologist who occasionally lectures on the topic of fieldwork. She may be contacted through the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society, 5607 Greenleaf Rd., Cheverly, MD 20785, USA.



exist. "Only Roma understand respect and Machvaia are the most respect." These principles support a separatist identity and emphasize the superiority of Gypsies to non-Gypsies in terms of purity and respect.

Congruent with the preceding and equally important as a factor of segregation is the system of beliefs and practices concerning luck. Central to these are those concerning romani baX, the luck and destiny of all Roma being considered related and interdependent. Machvaia believe their lifestyle, their laws, occupations, their luck and destiny are divinely ordained as separate and distinct from those of the non-Gypsies.²

Luck as a system pervades every aspect of life. At one end of the spectrum it incorporates the most conservative elements of group identity, religious belief, and the Machvaia value of being "good with each other." According to the ideal, it all goes together, having wealth, fame, being high class, healthy, forgiving, kind, good, generous, "understandable" to other Machvaia, and being lucky. Those who are angry, jealous, without respect or awareness of shame, who are poor, stingy, unforgiving, crazy, who brag and are given to bad thoughts—they are conceived of as bad luck for others and worse luck for themselves.

Like defilement, luck is conceived of as an imminently contagious power which tends to mix and spread. That which is pure and in keeping with the practices of good health is believed to be lucky. But the cultural guidelines regarding the Machvaia systems of defilement and respect are considered invariably effective. Rituals associated with luck, on the other hand, many of which are personal, idiosyncratic, and practiced away from the regard of community and family, do not always provide the certainty of success.

The fundamental means to good luck is "keeping the good;" this requires ongoing reevaluation, a constant critique of performance and outcome. Luck has the potential for change according to the situation of the moment. The enterprising individual can throw caution to the wind and follow the omen of "feeling" and intuition in a new direction. Should enough families become involved, this new activity might be reconceived as in keeping with the fate of the group, beginning a new chapter in Machvaia history. In this regard, the Machvaia, their society and culture, can be perceived as both rigidly inflexible and flexibly opportunistic.

Keeping Luck

Machvaia beliefs about luck might once have been categorized as animism or, according to Marett, animatism, a "non-personalized concept of spirit [as in Native American] orenda and manitou, and better yet the Polynesian term of mana" (1930:66). More recently, Gravel has noted parallels between mana and the Western concept of luck which, "being neither good nor bad in itself... must be controlled so



that it will manifest only its good aspect." For him, mana is an impersonal power much like the concept of energy in physics. It resides in "people, animal, plants, inanimate objects, natural events...activities...a position in a social structure...human emotions...[and is a word] used generically by anthropologists [regarding] small-scale subsistence and quasi-subsistence societies" (1995:40-3).

Machvaia believe that everything, like generic mana, has the potential for some kind of power. The critical question is how a particular power will be experienced. Ideas about luck (baX) address this indeterminacy.

In the following section I will deal with how luck is primarily conceptualized and how, by adhering to traditional Roma practices and the process of advantageous "matching," the goodness of luck is protected.

Gadzhendzhi BaX. Romani BaX

Among the Gypsies I know, people outside the family are routinely lumped into two major designations, like and unlike, Roma and non-Roma, Machvaia and outsiders, us and them. The Machvaia Roma live with both kinds, but they identify with one.

The Machvaia, a small and closely intermarried society of around 5000, conceive of their destiny and that of the outsiders (gadzhe, American people) as entirely different. This difference is obvious in regard to the unwritten Romani laws, the romania, which, because of the ordinance of birth and bloodlines, Roma are required by sacred duty to obey. On the other hand, Americans, owing to their birthright, follow American laws and lifestyles. I am told the reason for the disparity is incontrovertible and absolute. "That's the way God made it."

Outsiders are understood as destined for school and jobs with regular salaries. As adults, they become doctors, lawyers, presidents, and run the world. School tends to undercut a Gypsy's belief in the authority of the romania and the elders of the family. Holding down an "American" job shames a woman and handicaps a man's effectiveness in the Gypsy world. With marriage, Gypsy children become adults who are suited to whatever trades their lineage inheritance suggests. Among Machvaia, this is fortune telling for the women. If the men work at all, they usually buy and sell used cars (their grandfathers traded horses). "That's our luck," they will say, meaning inheritance and fate.

The popular expression pei gadzhendzhi baX translates as "Let the gadzhe luck go back to the gadzhe" or, more literally, "On the American people's luck." Although losing vehement force among the younger generations, this expression verges on a curse and is heard whenever something tragic, disgraceful, or normally associated with the affairs of the gadzhe (outsiders) happens. Here are two recent examples. A Machvanka said, "pei gadzhendzhi baX" when she learned about



another Machvanka's lucky windfall of money, as did a Machvano who was embarrassed at the appearance of his niece at a celebration wearing a backless dress.

Machvaia generally assume what is good luck for outsiders will be bad luck for Gypsies. Once illness was invariably associated with an offense against Gypsy law and certain Gypsy diseases were distinguished from American diseases (Sutherland 1975:278); Roma, in fact, considered themselves impervious to the latter. At one time it was unlucky to read books or to keep track of money. According to the old belief, "each time a Gypsy counts his money, it gets less." Planning for the future, writing down those plans, buying insurance, obtaining credit, owning houses, all were once considered the inherited luck of outsiders and disastrous activities for Gypsies—a failure of congruency and matching.

Beliefs of this kind gradually fall out of favor. One reason for this is the contrary example of wealthy Machvaia who manage extensive real estate holdings or own a business and who are said to live "the American way." Although esteemed for their ability to provide the luck of happiness by entertaining lavishly at ceremonials, their example is not without flaws. Since the Machvaia arrived in America, a good many of the more successful have lost their inheritance, their health, and even their lives by excessive drinking, gambling, overdoing the good luck of good times, and (this is the usual presumption) fraternizing with outsiders.

The luck of Machvaia, as well as that of all Roma, is perceived as interconnected and mutually productive. As mentioned, beliefs about luck are part of a larger system, the romania which, as Sutherland has noted (1975:101-102), subsumes everything considered as pertaining to Roma, including ideology, morality, rituals, and laws. To this one might add the people themselves—Roma are certain that an aptitude for these matters is inborn.

Because they belong to the same named lineage group, or vitsa³ and are conceived of as similar by kind and their heritage is more of a match, Machvaia believe that ultimate virtue and contentment will be found within their group. The dramatic affirmation of this is experienced at parties and ceremonial events. The good times of singing, dancing, and convivial drinking sponsors the feeling of good will, a central ethic, and community bonding. Happiness is luck and I am told that "no one has a better time than Gypsies."

It is considered mandatory to offer hospitality to all Machvaia and to any other Roma who are visiting. Eating together is, of course, symbol and substance of incorporation. Unity of kind is portrayed and expressed by eating from the same table. The ritual of commensality affirms knowing how to behave in a kind and respectful manner, being of a common destiny, being of good standing as regards the romania, being Roma.



These past years, hospitality has changed. Fewer dishes are served and the amounts of food, although generous from the outsider standpoint, have become more modest. But 30 years ago Machvano Stevo (Lee/Todorovich:30)⁴ told me,

Food is a really big thing. If a person doesn't get a bite of what he wants, he'll get sick. He'll go home, think about it all the time, dream about the food, and become postarniko [a fasting and bewitched person]. That's serious. He sees it and he needs it.

So if somebody sees what I eat, I always have the habit to say "Have some." Because if you want it and don't get it, it's on your mind, you can die. That's the way Gypsies are. When it comes to food, we have to have it. It's most important with pregnant women; we offer to them first. "Try it!" 5

Machvaia hospitality is further authorized by penalty and threat. The people say those who fail to consider the gustatory needs of another can find themselves haunted by a hungry, hostile, potentially lethal ghost. These days, no one seems to die of *postarniko*. (Nor are they likely to die from starvation.) Nonetheless, sharing food, offering hospitality, is still underwritten by the most ominous implications and those who are selfish and unfeeling towards their fellows' needs—particularly as these relate to food—are believed to lose their luck.

Offers of generous hospitality also demonstrate and affirm brotherhood and sharing, values fundamental to the good luck of good times. BaX is associated with the loyalty of Machvaia friends and relatives, with popularity, with endless rounds of eating and drinking—in sum, with that fortuitous state of grace in which one pleases oneself while pleasing all the others. The good wishes of others are believed to be critical to good luck; bad wishes have the opposite effect. The Machvaia, however, are bound by no such loyalty or obligation to outsiders.

Luck as Fate and Bloodlines

Roma are historically associated with the peoples of India (Fraser 1992:10-32) and, as Sampson (1926:22) and Gjerdman and Ljungberg (1963) have noted, the word baX appears to be related to the Sanskrit word for destiny or fate (bhagya). Susan Wadley, who studied a lower Sweeper caste in northern India, writes that bhagya derives from "the word share or portion. It's one's share of fortune or misfortune (nirbhagya)" (1983:160). Among Machvaia, baX is thought to determine the quality of life's main events which, as in Indian belief about karma and bhagya, includes "time of death, length of life, identity of spouse, serious illnesses...sex of children, level of poverty or prosperity... occupation" (Kolenda 1964:73) as well as vitsa affiliation.

The major messages of Machvaia luck are presumed to be carried by bloodlines—grandparents to parents to child—through the generations. Luck



inheritance is reckoned cognatically, through both parents. But marriage is normally patrilocal, the bride, purchased by brideprice, going to live with the husband's parents. Because luck tends to pool and spread, patrilocality emphasizes the qualities of the father's, more than the mother's, family.

Each Romani family, bloodline, and vitsa is ranked according to the proven splendor of their luck. Those vitsi highly regarded, such as the California Machvaia who are the subject of this study, regard themselves as purer, more auspicious, happier, richer, more powerful and cohesive than the other Roma groups. Those already well favored, those people who are baXtale 'lucky,' expect further bounties of good luck; they know "how to do it." On the other hand, it is known to be difficult, if not impossible, for those from a poor and low-class family and vitsa —at least as others see them—to change their luck and find success. The terms bibaX 'without luck', Beng 'The Devil', and prikadza 'the demon of bad luck' are often heard among the latter.

Luck by inheritance, the luck associated with being from the "same kind" or the "same family," is regarded as enduring, rather like a primary identity. Every tragedy or noteworthy circumstance is examined and reexamined for evidence of inherited luck. When the Machvaia say, "That's like her great uncle," they refer to an individual's lineal inheritance. Sometimes luck through bloodlines is more comprehensive. One Machvaia vitsa, for example, is known for large appetites, another for the tendency to thrift, another for heart attacks and dying young. In these cases, the Machvaia might say, "It runs in that family." Regarding a Machvano who is rich but not popular, the comment was, "He has money luck in the way of the Adams' [a prominent bloodline], but no company luck."

Luck by Association and Matching

The powers of luck, good, bad, or indifferent, are also communicated through proximal contacts with certain people, places, objects, and ideas. The advantage of good luck is associated with the sacred and the new, good thoughts, generous gifts, and the merit of fresh beginnings. These are the items the people keep near and the activities they prefer to pursue.

Because powers tend to mix and spread, and baX is conceived as flowing readily from one person to another, the intimacy of living and sleeping together combines the powers of husband and wife. Eating from the same table, to a lesser degree, will mix luck. Petrovich, a doctor who studied Serbian Gypsies for many years, writes, "He who has no luck of his own may derive it from someone else" (1940:41). When I asked Old Mila (Miller/Adams1:68), a Machvanka I came to know quite well, how an unlucky Machvano could change his luck, she said, "He



should sit next to the lucky people." Then, she added this practical advice. "He should study them and find out how they do it."

It is possible to perceive some similarity between luck by association and what O'Flaherty describes as "transfer of merit," an old and persistent concept firmly rooted in the Vedic tradition and intrinsic to the theory of karma (1980a:xiii). Merit transfer indicates "the process by which one living creature willingly or accidentally gives to another a non-physical quality of his own, such as a virtue, credit for a religious achievement, a talent, or a power." O'Flaherty also notes that this is "often in exchange for a negative quality given by the recipient" (1980b:3).

Machvaia agree that bad luck may be the unfortunate result of a badly matched contact. To preserve their good luck, they ordinarily prefer to avoid those whom luck holds in perpetual disfavor, the person who looks bad to them, poor and wretched (tshor), mean (bendjailo), lawless and uncooperative (nai patchivale), or without awareness of shame (nai ladzhav). The poor are believed to be desperate and to take great risks for meager gains. Roma of this kind cannot be trusted. They are suspected of thievery, continual bad thoughts, curses. Because luck is conceived as contagious, bad luck people enlist pity, even charity, but are usually avoided by those with better luck.

On the other hand, giving puts the giver up into the more ascendant and respectable dimension and is expected to create luck. If the risk doesn't appear too great, those who are both fortunate and generous may be willing to take their chances.

The matching of good with good is the recommended means of keeping luck. When they are matched, the powers of luck are expected to flower into an abundance. A fertile and productive power, luck is conceptualized as having the potential for unlimited increase. Luck attracts luck and those characteristics giving evidence of baX are believed to go together, the presence of one suggesting all the others. People described as beautiful, for example, are expected to have the advantage of becoming rich, popular, intelligent, and admirable in other ways as well.⁸

Those who wish you well are considered baXtale; Old Mila assured me, "Whoever means good for you, that's the way you're going to be good. You better stick with that person." Good is also encouraged through activities associated with baX, such as the timely observance of moral law and solicitous care regarding ritual observances and separations. According to romania, actions and thoughts are to be harmonious, respectful, generous, and soft-hearted (kovlo ilo). Good luck becomes attenuated and bad luck is primed for increase by the cavalier mixing of unlike powers, improprieties leading to pollution, lack of shame awareness, and, of course, time spent with the wrong people.



In sum, the nature of one's luck is primarily conceptualized as that mysterious portion of fate which is inherited through bloodlines. This can be modified through the character of one's contacts and activities on a day-to-day basis. The chief concern is with personal control; one Machvano said, "What matters in this world is what you do with the luck you are given." Even the Hindu Puranas texts exhort the worshipper to undertake remedial actions in order to "swim like a salmon upstream against the current of karma" (O'Flaherty 1980:14). As Old Mila watched a televised show about delayed parachute jumps, she admitted, "I know you don't die before your time. But I don't think I want to try that anyhow."

Making Luck

Machvaia use both expressions, keeping luck and making your luck, the latter (cheres chi baX) with more frequency. But the processes overlap and the distinction between the preceding and this section is chiefly a matter of emphasis. The reality is that it is impossible to know for sure whether a boon of luck is the result of keeping or making, keeping luck's inheritance or making more luck.

The following deals with how some luck prescriptions tend to conserve tradition and others afford the possibility of innovation. I begin with those items and practices which provide the greatest assurance of success. These are the ones least likely to be reversed—reversal is customary, e.g., laughing means crying—when Machvaia interpret their dreams. They relate most directly to corporate Machvaia luck and the sacred. They have a meaning that is universal and not easily lost or denied.

Conventional and Corporate Means to Luck

The Machvaia regard certain items as pure, damage-resistant, and of an enduring auspicious value. These include the holy pictures and icons, saint's-day candles, incense, whatever may be associated with long-dead ancestors, with fresh air, trees (particularly trees with blossoms), green leaves, fresh fast-running streams where "you can see the bottom," bottles of liquor, uncut bolts of cloth, money, beautiful music and dancing, the colors red and green, fresh fruit, fine jewels and gold, the shiny, the new, the upwards direction, abundance, gifts, ceremonial foods, as well as less tangible assets like wisdom, knowledge, and good advice. These convey refined powers and are highly ranked on the scale of desirability; they and related items make ideal gifts. To dream of these or of green snakes, bright new paint, dancing waves and froth, anything moving in the "up" direction, to dream of increase or beginnings (like babies), indicates approaching luck.



Certain actions are auspicious. Those associated with cleanliness, purity, ritual avoidance, and fasting, and those involved with respect etiquette and generous hospitality are particularly potent. Singing, dancing, gambling, giving gifts are activities of pleasure and merit and said to create good luck. Serving foods associated with baX is mandatory on saints' days and at celebrations. Odd numbers are auspicious for important ritual acts, including the three and seven that Sutherland mentions (1975:283).

In the natural order of things, birth, baptism, and marriage are rites of passage believed to increase luck powers exponentially. The increase feeds through the entire family. By reason of contact, whoever attends these events, even those who are not relatives, can reap a benefit.

There is, in fact, a certain cachet to whatever is in a beginning stage, a potential for power that can stimulate and create new luck. Ritual optimizes this potential by matching, by bringing many good luck factors together. At baptisms and weddings, the changing status of a new baby or a bride and groom must be matched with new clothes, entire wardrobes, including underclothes. For the recently dead, new clothes are even more important, both before the burial and after; at the death commemorations, entire outfits are given to the individual accepting the ritual suit of clothes on behalf of the deceased. The new, the pure, the beginning stages are all especially lucky.

Saints are the guardians and givers of luck and celebrating saints' feast days brings luck. Holidays are for the ancestors who protect the luck of their descendants. The holidays, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, the New Year, signify renewal and are believed to preview the future. At weddings, the guests are likely to say to the family of the groom whose family is described as "getting" the bride, "May your daughter-in-law prove lucky for your family." At a baptism, the godparent might say to the godchild, "May the lucky one have good health, good luck and grow big and (eventually) old." On saints' days, guests wish their hosts good luck and health, invoking the name of the saint honored. The preceeding confirms that good luck and that filled with the power of good are analogous.

God (O Del) is the ultimate arbiter of luck and considered manifest in every evidence of luck. God, being "all good," "the highest," is most often associated with exceptional good luck—or with tragedy. Like the saints and the dead who are "near God," "the same as God," a century ago baX, represented as a female spirit, was celebrated by one pioneer Serbian Machvaia family with prayers, flowers, food offerings, and candles.

The standard good-byes of host and guest are dzha Devlesa 'go with God', or ash Devlesa, 'remain with God', followed by the prayer, sastimasa, baXtasa, 'with health, with luck'. Machvaia regard health and luck as "everything to wish for,"



"happiness." It is apparent in the preceding ritual contexts that Machvaia conceive of baX as comprehending a blessing, happiness, success. Those showing evidence of much good luck are expected to be, and to have been, especially virtuous and generous.

Closely associated with the luck of bloodlines are the dead, who are said to help with prayers, avenge their descendants, and afford favors and boons. Remembering the dead with love and gifts is believed critical to keeping and protecting a family's good luck. At several intervals during the first year after death, feasts of commemoration (pomeni) must be offered. As Stevo (Lee/Todorovich:35) said, "It's better to celebrate the dead before they think about it, before they get mad."

Machvanka Dolly (Uwanovich/Rupert:46), who was her dead father's favorite, has dreams of him on occasion. One summer he "showed up" several times to indicate which horses would win the following day. During her memorable visits to the Bay Meadows race track, Dolly made thousands of dollars on long shots. Some of the people described her as a BaXtali (a Big Luck Woman). Because she invariably shared fifty-fifty with her companions, all the local women welcomed an invitation to accompany her to the track, to share her luck, to receive what might be considered a transfer of her merit.

Personal Luck

More than half a century ago and several decades after the Machvaia had arrived on these shores from Serbia, Alexander Petrovich wrote of Gypsies in Serbia that "every man has his luck, some better, some worse.... So the greatest wisdom in life for the Serbian Gypsy is to discover who and what (person, animal, or thing) brings him luck, and to keep that person or thing for himself" (1940:41).

Luck beliefs shape on-going behavior. But luck depends on the evidence of outcome. Before validation the good or bad character of luck, like that of karma, is unknown. Uncertainty of what will be lucky, the gap between performance and outcome, the question of how much, or little, luck is deserved makes any enterprise an adventure. Even ordinarily estimable items like those previously mentioned can, for reasons unknown, become *nai worta* 'not right'.

Old Mila, for example, lost the luck of fine jewelry. "Any more," she explained, "I don't have heart for jewelry. When I was having all that trouble and moving, I never stopped." She had entrusted some, maybe all of her jewelry and savings to Ruzha, her oldest daughter. And something happened. Ruzha lost it. Or perhaps Ruzha's husband spent it on the horses. "Never mind," Old Mila said. "It's gone."



She still loved the glitter, however—glitter is lucky—of earrings, golden bracelets, necklaces, sequined hair ornaments. When I knew her, there were several occasions when she got enough money from a client to afford a few pieces of good value, the kind of authentic jewelry which is traditionally considered essential to adult costuming on ritual occasions. But, making the most of the luck she had been given, Old Mila seemed entirely content to shop at Woolworth's for cheap baubles of gold wash, enamel, glass, and whatever struck her fancy. "They've got more styles," she pointed out.

Those who understand their luck will honor and treasure what proves beneficial. This, of course, varies from family to family. Wherever Old Mila's son Blensi (Pavlovich/Adams1:30) moved, he took an entourage of cars—a late model Cadillac for driving to the ceremonials, an antique sports car that was an investment intended to pay for future brideprices and weddings, and the aging lucky Ford that carried him, his wife, and baby to Seattle, the city of their good fortune. To show his appreciation and match blessing with blessing, he rented a garage in a fancy neighborhood for the good luck Ford. He kept the Ford polished and in perfect repair. On occasion, he drove it to McDonald's, filling the interior with hamburger smells and the happy voices of his children. He took care of his luck to invite more luck.

On the ceremonial occasions, to boost the auspicious qualities of their respect, all guests are expected to arrive in exceptionally clean and elegantly formal attire. Those who achieve a particularly turned-out appearance combined with a pleasant attitude and expression are said to look baXtale. Looking lucky creates a propitious environment for everyone in attendance and is associated with status.

But for many of the prescriptions regarding how luck is to be made I can think of exceptions. Fine clothes, for example, had no meaning for Toma (Adams2/Lee:50). When he disobeyed his wealthy father by returning to the ailing wife he loved, public opinion declared he had gone his own way. Losing the luck of his natal family, he opted for friends and a lifestyle of a less prestigious kind. Now Toma doesn't dress up, even for parties. The Machvaia know the reason. To attend his daughter's wedding at the elegant St. Francis Hotel, he came without a tie or jacket. None of the guests seemed surprised. The people said, "That's Toma. That's the way he's found his luck."

The Machvaia ruefully admit that luck might be found anywhere, in anything, and gained when least expected. Under normal circumstances, the risk of going to a hospital or a graveyard is undertaken only when necessary. Even in company of other Gypsies, such places are presumed to be dangerously rife with ghosts, death, and disease. But when her father was dying and she was sleeping overnight at the hospital, Sadie (Merino/Adams1:54) gave readings to the nursing staff in the Intensive Care unit. Those readings brought her the luck of regular customers. Now,



whenever she runs low on funds, she puts on her good luck dress, calls a cab, and looks for her luck in the Cedars of Sinai lobby. To avoid her family's horrified objections, she lies about where she is going.

Luck as Attitude and Enterprise

Economics is an area of life that, more often than not, eludes the certainty of good outcomes. Like many European Gypsies, American Roma operate in the unofficial margins of the business world. Their methods of earning income are designed to offer as little competition as possible to the larger society and intended to attract no attention whatsoever from the local police or a punitive agency of the Federal government. They require no non-Gypsy training and are the kind of occupations that parents are bound to teach their children.

Sales is the inherited trade of most Roma groups. They sell occult services, fresh or paper flowers, scrap metal, car body repairs, second-hand cars, and so forth. These efforts are normally sales on a first contact basis. Without union membership, a business license or, in most cases, a listing in the yellow pages, success depends primarily upon the ability to convey a winning self-assurance. Closing a sale is often a matter of inspired judgment and timing. There are good days and bad; the rule is to keep the good luck flowing by capitalizing on the former.

The personal luck of Machvaia "business" is largely found through trial and error. With time, the resident Machvaia women in the larger cities tend to discover a certain group or a particular problem that suits them and provides some measure of success. Nena (Uwanovich/Pavlovich:68), for example, favors the local Filipino crowd; her cousin (Adams2/Pavlovich:43), who lives in Stockton, speaks Spanish with Latino clients; another cousin, Leila (Lee/John:65), reads the palms and auras of University students in Berkeley. Praying, fasting, lighting candles, they learned their specialties through experience. Whatever works for them is called their baX.

As a system of belief, luck explains success, rationalizes defeat, depersonalizes loss, provides the lucky with spiritual credit, and encourages the unlucky to persist in the hope that things will change. Blaming luck avoids the despair of taking a failure personally and makes it easier to approach prospective customers again and again. ¹⁰ In this sense, belief supports the Roma tradition of entrepreneurial methods of employment.

Looking and Acting Lucky to Become Lucky

In the 1960s and 1970s foretelling the future was an illegal activity in many American states. To stay within the law, the women I knew took great pains to avoid any direct mention of coming events during readings. This was hard for Old Mila



who had learned to tell fortunes in an era when information about the future was expected. Although under constant threat of arrest, the possibility didn't seem to dismay her; as she said, "living is always a risk and a chance." When beleaguered, she was resolute; if a creditor was at her door, she didn't want to know. She showed me that to encourage oncoming good luck, it was essential to behave in a lucky fashion. She did this in so many ways: by bathing and cleaning the house and taking "time out for a little pleasure;" by fixing a banquet-size meal and inviting me to share it; by dressing up, pinning butterfly ribbons at the back of her curls, and going to town "to give them some more of my money." Like attracts like. Old Mila created an upbeat climate to attract good luck's favors.

I used to wonder how she managed to support such a comfortable lifestyle. In retrospect I realize that she got by on the interest of good expectation. "Believe in your luck and luck will come to you." Owing to her propensity for spending money as soon as she made it, there were occasions when, opening her refrigerator door, I would find nothing on the shelves. But Old Mila refused to acknowledge deprivation by refusing to admit there was anything she couldn't afford. Each summer, counting, I suppose, on a check in the mail from an especially grateful customer, she would announce that she had bought some marked-down furs on layaway. But winter followed winter without the appearance of the ermine cape or the platinum fox throw she had chosen. I learned from her lack of remorse that it hardly mattered when none of the expensive furs were delivered. Anticipation was what mattered, the open invitation to good luck.

Machvaia attitudes toward money and how money is accumulated might well outrage Protestant notions of thrift. Gambling, 11 spending, and giving gifts of money, all put the giver "up" and encourage future funding by creating a link, a direct conduit to luck's power. Luck generates more luck and people who look lucky to become lucky. Everyone wants to know how much has been won after a weekend at the slot machines or an afternoon at Cash Creek Indian Bingo. (They prefer what they call "Indian Bingo" to neighborhood bingo because the winnings, they say, are more generous.) Winning is emphasized and losses tend to be disregarded. The minute she won eight thousand at a five-dollar slot machine in Tahoe, Bibio (Pavlovich/Adams1:90) called her daughter Anastasia (Todorovich/Pavlovich:48) with the news. The daughter didn't caution Bibio to keep enough for the rent or stop while she was ahead. Instead, Anastasia assured her that "Luck is on your side. Keep going. Try for the Lotto jackpot. It's up in the millions."

To think poor is to be poor, and Old Mila, who had been money-rich for a good many years, believed that spending was essential to accumulation. She spent as if she were broadcasting seeds preliminary to a prodigious harvest. While she had it, she spent it, hoping to attract more baX. But one time, finding nothing but a few quarters in her purse, she complained, "Money wants to drive everybody crazy."



BaX po Drom

I am told that luck can be found anywhere, in anything, and, as mentioned, whatever is in a new and beginning stage holds a particular potential. Moving effects the maximum change, moving from one neighborhood to another or moving from state to state. Once, moving from country to country was recommended. Looking for luck is usually associated with business-related endeavors and traveling "to look for luck po drom" on the road" increases the possibility of improvement through fortuitous encounter. Young couples with small children are especially mobile; they look for a measure of financial and psychological independence from their elders. Until the present century, the Machvaia were horse, wagon, and tent nomads and they still believe in the luck on the road.

Old Mila moved to change her luck. When her bills exceeded her ability to pay them and her customers weren't giving her enough for the rent, she got her son on the phone and ordered him to look for a more promising location.

As her age advanced, each move involved a greater effort. She painted the ceiling and walls, bought new rugs and drapes, packed and unpacked, and went to bed for a week: "My heart tired out." A new address, new stores to shop, the novelty of a new clientele and new neighbors meant, she hoped, fresh infusions of good luck.

Following the Feeling

As mentioned, everything has some kind of power and how that power is experienced is considered a matter of luck. As often as not, Machvaia are guided by the way they feel. Feeling—Machvaia use the verb filiz 'you feel'— anticipates outcome and is regarded as omen. Paying attention to feeling finds the good direction. Anything—a hat, a scent, a sigh—can signal the advance of a prescient feeling indicating it is worta 'right' or nai worta 'wrong'.

On the basis of a little sad feeling she associates with bus travel, one Machvanka (*Pavlovich/Adams1:60*) never takes the bus. The time she tried it proved "for me, all buses are bad luck."

Premonitions of disaster are respected. The local Machvaia left San Francisco within the hour on several separate occasions in the 1970s and early 1980s. They called me to come, "Hurry, get your things. There's going to be a terrible earthquake. Can't you feel it?"

Stevo was a Machvano who was never known to be particularly lucky. For income, he was required to buy cars second-hand at a bargain price and to sell them for as much as he could get. Convinced the direction of his luck could be discovered in a feeling, "Like I drove north for a while, and then I came back to town, went to Alki Beach, and got a feeling to go back north. That's where I made fifty dollars



fixing fenders. I knew I would. I had the feeling. It's a...sympathetic feeling. That's how I live."

He explained he began each day with the traditional morning Gypsy ritual. "I get up, wash my hands and then my face. Then I feel fresh. I feel different." If the children hadn't ripped his newspaper into unreadable shreds, he checked the ads in the automobile section. If he wasn't required to run a sick or injured child to the emergency clinic, he might ease into the day with the luxury of a second cup of coffee. "Then I feel rich. That's the right way to feel when you're going to work." However, if his wife hollered at him before breakfast, her words transferred the bad luck of her anger and he didn't bother leaving the house: "She ruined it."

But if his many children were hungry or the rent was due and inactivity wasn't a viable option, Stevo was required to change the character of the day and "do something" he doesn't do too well and hates, which is to try to get a job fixing dented fenders. He would *del ando wass* 'give from the hand', i.e., make an offering to the ancestors. Then, hoping for the best, he looked for his luck on the road.

The Machvaia say, "God knows what's in your heart," and the appropriate feeling, more than procedure by word or gesture, is the essence of ritual. When approaching a saint or blessing a godchild, a sanctified feeling is required for the ritual to become effective. As already mentioned, those who attend a public event should arrive with generous hearts, ready to see the others attending in the good way. Those with angry thoughts and vendettas are well advised to show they know and abide by the etiquette of respect by staying away. The troublemakers who insist on attending run the risk of bad luck. As Old Mila said, "The God said for the people to be nice to each other. Respect. Quiet."

The feeling of happiness promotes more happiness. Whenever possible, excepting those events related to death, happiness, the luck of happiness, the luck of music, singing, dancing and celebration is the goal. The people come to holidays, parties, saint's-day feasts—saints require happiness—with an appetite for enjoyment. To look and act full of luck is the prescribed behavior. They must dance when asked; participation is essential. These are the times that prove "God loves Gypsies best," the bliss of empathetic feelings peak, and the corporate luck of the group is signified to everyone's satisfaction.

The Wish, the Word, the Thought

At the turn of the century when Sampson studied the language of Welsh Gypsies, a dialect considered relatively conservative, the verb baXter had two definitions: "1. to bless, to wish or make happy...[as] May God bless thee," a thought similar to the ubiquitous Machvaia blessing te del tut o Del baX tai sastipe, 'God give you luck and health'. 2. to wish, to will, to conjure, to effect by an act of volition



(especially in magical transformations...)" (Sampson 1926:23). The Machvaia currently have no verbal form of baX. But they do believe in the power of the wish and the will to affect present and coming events. Both good and bad luck can be influenced by zurale ginduria 'strong thoughts'.

Gropper concurs with Sampson's definition. "[Gypsies] do believe in the power of words—that a wish verbalized may come true..." (1975:167) and that a strong belief in something brings about its own fulfillment."

Old Mila conjured good thoughts. "I always get what I want. That's why I'm never jealous. You want to know how to do it? You just hold it in your mind, lightly, not too hard, and do other things. Believe in it and you get it."

The wish, the word, or the thought is tantamount to the deed, the good creating the good. In keeping with the possibilities that can be found in fresh beginnings, Old Mila changed her name to change her luck. When clients stopped calling her for readings, she threw away her business flyers for Ruth and said, "Ruby. That's my new name. How do you like it? Ruth didn't do a thing for me." Teasing, "You be Ruth now and see how it works for you."

Keeping the good requires steering clear of defeat. Machvaia agree it is best not to think about or to mention unlucky matters. It seems that talking about a misfortune can lend the words a reality that might make it happen again. When I recounted a dream I had about dying to Rachel, Old Mila's daughter (Pavlovich/Adams1:56), she said, "You'd better forget that. Put it out of your mind. If you don't, you could make it happen."

Speaking the name of the Devil or the dead should be avoided: "He might think I want him." To be victimized in any way, even in dreams, is bad luck. Referring to tragic circumstances is especially dangerous. When I tried to tell Blensi, one of Old Mila's sons, what was likely to have happened to his relatives in Serbia during the Nazi pogroms, he begged me to be silent. "We don't want to hear about that."

The verbal discussion of any sensitive topic threatens luck. When I first began to inquire about luck, I felt particularly lucky to find Ephraim, a Kalderash Rom who was momentarily willing to risk luck as a conversational topic.

"What's luck? Everyone knows that. Americans, too. They go to the races, millions of them. Sometimes they win. Sometimes they lose. Same with Gypsies. But Americans go home when they lose and the Gypsies keep gambling; there's no way they could stop. Anyhow, life is a gamble. Any day, a person could be dead, instead." This last remark made him nervous. Muttering, "Knock on wood, knock on stone, throw the fire over the shoulder," lines of consternation wrinkled Ephraim's forehead and his knuckles beat a brief tattoo on the table top. "Now why did I say that? *Prikadza*! Don't ask me any more crazy questions."



Ritual requires a good will. When approaching the saints, the dead, or God, the appropriate frame of mind is critical. Intent is what empowers ritual action. Lack of intent has the opposite effect and failure to keep the separations protecting the pure doesn't count if accidental and consequently unintended. His wife sat on Old Yasha's lucky hat and, because he knew she didn't mean to, he laughed and put it on his head.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspects of baX beliefs are the emphases on intuition as a directive for finding luck and the power of the word, the will, the intention to affect outcomes. Both beliefs have elements that, to the pragmatic Westerner, might well be considered psychic, "lying outside the realm of physical science or knowledge," according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. One of them, following intuition to discover luck, is coherent with what the Machvaia women, who advertise as psychics, seem to do when giving readings. Reading the future for themselves in terms of the direction of feeling and reading it for non-Gypsies doesn't seem much of a jump; both efforts emphasize intuition, suspend critical thought, and contradict the literal and rational. When I was learning to tell fortunes, the women advised me to say whatever I was thinking or feeling. "It's easy. Let it out." I was also warned by one who knew me well that I shouldn't become overly concerned with what I might say or the words wouldn't automatically pop into my mouth.

The root for the word drabarimos 'fortune telling' is drab 'drug, medicine', indicating that the drabarni 'fortune teller' may originally have been a medicine woman, curer, and healer. Even today, some of the money-hungry Machvanki are pleased to perform the role of shaman and remove the curse of bad luck from their clients. The drabarni—a role central to a woman's prestige and self worth—is currently expected to be the main economic support of the Machvaia family. Training for prescience is encouraged from the time females are children. Once I heard a mother say to her six-year-old daughter, "Put your mind with the baby's. If he falls it will be your fault."

The Machvaia women believe they are born with the gift for fortunes and that fortunes are their luck (fate). But consolidating the power of the gift requires practice. Janey's first cousin, Gina (Pavlovich/Uwanovich), couldn't have been more than four years old when she made all the women in the room nod their approval. Opening my hand, she frowned in concentration at my palm and told me what she saw there. "A quarter for a double Popsicle. You can have half."

Telling fortunes involves getting past words to intention. For the very young, this can be a ruthless and difficult lesson. The first time Pretty Rosie (Pavlovich/Adams1:32) said, "I hate you" to her little daughter, Janey cried. The second time, Janey (Adams2/Pavlovich:5) looked puzzled. The third time, Janey answered her



back. "I hate you too," adding for good measure, "Mami ['Grandmother'] is prettier than you." Then they both laughed and Rosie turned to me to say, "You see? She's a smart one."

The preceding section refers to how luck is made, whether the means are idiosyncratic and limited to one individual or one family, like Blensi's good luck Ford and Sadie's unexpected success at the hospital, or more universal and conventional—the saint's-day celebration that benefits the entire community is an example. The Machvaia are not interested in the aforementioned differences. They don't make a distinction between personal and corporate luck, between luck through bloodline and luck that "follows the feeling." To them luck is all the same kind, one luck for each person, and the serious business of life is to discover the nature of one's luck and what might be done with it. Luck is whatever works, which is usually the culturally valued or what has previously proved advantageous.

When it isn't, the enterprising Gypsy family often relies on experimental traveling to discover their luck on the road. They keep a close tab on the omen of "feeling" relative to the ongoing situation. In the event of crisis, the Machvaia may fall back on strong thoughts and the damage of curses.

Bad Luck

Projecting the Blame

Virtue and luck are expected to be synonymous. Relying on divine justice, Machvaia believe—a bit wistfully, it's true—that each reward or punishment relates in some way to the merit of a thought or action, and that this is bound to affect the party responsible and/or someone in the same family. Eventually, and by what means they cannot say, the people expect that everyone will get exactly what he or she deserves. The effect of the bad and good are felt on earth, not the hereafter: the people say "Heaven and Hell are here on earth." It is through fate/luck's actualization, through witness of the results that what is deserved can be discovered.

But those who are good are not always lucky and anyone can be vulnerable to a run of bad luck. I note, however, that the Machvaia seldom blame themselves or the mistakes they may have made for their misfortunes. They prefer to project, blaming either their luck, God, Americans, or the jealousy of "those other people"—and by this they usually mean other Gypsies. The curses of jealous people have a serious power for damage. In most cases, however, the identities of the jealous people is never confirmed and can only be suspected.

As the aches and pains of old age increased, Old Mila attributed her frailty to witchcraft: "I say it's undeserved witchcraft." Then she admitted this was guesswork.



When her daughter suffered a round of bad health, a scandal associated with her husband was suspected. Mila: "I think it's him. He's making her bad luck." But the agency of luck is pretty much a matter of opinion and some of those outside the family said it was the result of the tendency for craziness that runs in that bloodline. Others thought it was the doctor's fault. "She should try more doctors. It's hard to find good ones. They don't care. They just want money" (Stevens/Lee; 50).

In keeping with the important concept of matching, like must be met with like. Good powers are offered the good thought; they are sought, venerated, and adored. Evil—an unfriendly ghost, for example—may have to be fought, destroyed by fire, cleared away with incense, threatened with defilement, bought off with money that is cursed, or tricked into submission.

The advice of a dour-faced Rom was, "If you want to be happy, say you're unhappy." Another said, "If you want to be rich, say you're poor." Also, "You give a beautiful child an ugly name so it won't have bad luck." And, "Compliments are bad luck. Insults are better. Your friends know how you feel." Those who suffer repeated bad luck, an overload of misfortune, become privy to various games and pranks that are intended to fool and vex bad luck.

The exemplary Old Mila called the preceding the "superstitions of those without luck." She assured me it was better to avoid duplicity and to see other people in the spirit of good will. "It's best to be prosto ['ordinary, simple']. Not pucharde ['puffed up']." When the Machvaia arrived in America, she told me, everyone was prosto: "We were all poor." Now the trick is to be high class, rich, famous, "big," without becoming insufferably proud or hated. She also warned me never to tempt fate. "Never make fun of someone who is crippled or unfortunate. If you do, you could end up the same."

I asked Mila what I should do when I got jealous. She recommended expressing the feeling frankly and "bringing it out." Direct expressions of jealousy indicate cathection, the desire to emulate the same behavior, and the gift of respect. Praise puts the receiver into the ascendant position and gifts, including the gift of praise, have a benefit to both parties. This exchange can create the basis for a new understanding.

Gravel writes that people who are envious emit negative and destructive mana that is "detrimental to the prevalent well-being of the community and to the particular productive and reproductive activities of individuals" (1995:41). He connects the mana, or power, of jealousy with the evil eye. Some Machvaia remember that the old people once believed in the evil eye. Everyone, however, seems privy to the power of jealousy and what they call strong thoughts.

Any intense but unexpressed emotion, the feelings of romantic love, longing, or acute grief, for example, emit negative power and can have a detrimental effect on personal well-being. Feelings of rage and jealousy lead to the damage of



witchcraft and cursing.¹² The curse, "the bad wish of jealous people," usually calls on the ancestors for assistance, invoking their divine and terrible will. (I understand that many people of European background also fear the Gypsy's curse.) The curse can be spoken or unspoken. Primarily an act of volition, the strength of the curse is expected to correspond to the degree in which it is felt.

To protect the goodness of their baX from the curses of others, those who are wise suggest being circumspect; never, they say, brag or flaunt good fortune. Bragging encourages jealousy, and jealousy creates the climate of witchcraft. George (Adams2/Adams2:47), who was in a godchild relationship with Old Mila, had a lot to say about the bad luck of jealousy.

Talking about things you got, things you might get, makes people jealous. It's connected with curses. People talk about you. They're crying because you're getting ahead. They're wearing a "crying face" [roindo mui is bad luck]. If I tell Boogie that I'm going to buy a Cadillac, he will probably tell the others and they will say, "Oh, he doesn't have enough money. He can't do that." Then, what they say is like a curse, the bad wish of jealous people. It isn't as strong as a strongly thought-out curse. But it's bad.

George wiggled his mustache in my direction and paused, giving me time to write the words that were "all true. I never lie to you." He continued.

On the other hand, you can turn it around. The word was out that my wife made five thousand dollars telling fortunes. That was a lot more than the amount we made. When the people would ask me if it was true, I'd say "I wish to God it happens that way." And it did for me. That's the opposite of a curse. I turned it into good luck.

Similarly, when a woman is asked, as she often is, "How's business? Are you making any money?" she is well advised to be discreet. Otherwise, other fortune tellers, including close relatives—those relatives impossible to refuse—are likely to move into her territory, copy her advertisements, and take away her customers.

Or they might achieve a similar result and ruin her luck by projecting angry, jealous thoughts. But, according to Old Mila, cursing is no job for amateurs. She was especially careful because curses, when undeserved, are "liable to backfire and fall back upon my house [harming someone in her family]."

Luck, Risk, and Marriage

Primarily because the luck and happiness of both families are directly involved, marriages are carefully arranged. Marriage, Stevo says, "is the biggest risk a Gypsy takes." Every effort is made to avoid compromising good luck and at the smallest omen or sign, particularly a bad feeling, either family is quick to call the prospective wedding off. As a consequence, marriage arrangements, even official engagements, are notoriously unstable.



A Machvanka daughter-in-law is normally regarded as a great boon of good luck. But a difficult divorce can involve heartache and fines as the bride goes back and forth between families (Miller:1988), and can further involve battles in kris (Roma court) over child custody and more battles in American courts, possible bankruptcy, loss of status and respect, loss of access to public events, ugly curses, accusations of witchcraft, and, in some especially tragic cases, permanent vendettas. Although penalties from outsiders are to be expected—indeed, Gypsies are defensively organized in that direction—penalties involving other Roma, particularly from the same group or vitsa, can threaten community stasis and good will, as well as damaging the people's confidence in the effectiveness of their institutions.

The care of the bride is entrusted to her husband's family. Until recently, tough mothers-in-law, the bride's low status, and her physically demanding role, ran risk to her health and well being. I didn't fully appreciate the risk until Old Mila told me about "the saddest thing that happened in my life." Many years ago it seems she had given her daughter Sonia to a very prominent Machvaia family in marriage. And she died. Old Mila was sure they had killed her. "They didn't get the doctor in time." Although she refused to label it as such, Old Mila retaliated with a curse. At the funeral, when confronted by her in-laws, "I said I won't be satisfied until you and your wife are dead. So the wife died. A little while later he died. They are buried next to my Sonia."

As I have mentioned, retribution is automatically and divinely ordained. It is expected that an injustice will be punished by an appropriate agency of bad luck, by God, by ghosts, the punishment affecting either the perpetrator or someone in the family. Her daughter's untimely death, however, so upset Old Mila that she hadn't been willing to wait for God to act.

As she got old and sick, her righteous certainty regarding the episode's cause and blame began to waver. She asked me, "What is that, pneumonia? How come nobody gets it anymore?" She had ambiguous dreams that indicated unresolved matters between herself and "those guys I put into the ground with God's help." At 70, she began to reconsider. Perhaps she remembered that to die with a grudge against other Machvaia, to leave this world without giving or having been given forgiveness could have terrible consequences. One possible result are the wandering unsatisfied ghosts that distress their families, terrorize their enemies, and cannot find their way to heaven. Another is the possible manifestation of angry thoughts from "The Other Side" that might ruin the future luck of her children. Old Mila didn't want to be permanently, and disastrously, associated with either.

In this regard luck is a system of beliefs whose checks and balances, the expectation of good and bad results, help keep the Machvaia "good with each other."



Luck Inside and Outside Convention

Machvaia live in two worlds, both part of and separate from the host culture. Their code of belief wars against conceding influence and authority to the non-Gypsy. At the same time, because they are American citizens and subject to American laws, a careless, even studied, disregard for documentation of any kind—birth certificates, licenses, social security numbers—often causes them trouble.

Tradition portrays the outside world and Americans as inhospitable, a threat to Machvaia values, the source of unending defilement, and an enduring temptation to the young to run away. Neither equipped nor encouraged by custom to deal with non-Gypsies on an equal, competitive, or intimate basis, they do the best they can. The Machvaia find their strength in obedience to romania and their primary defense in the invincible ancestors. "The *mule* ['the dead']," they say, "are on our side." (When romania is obeyed, the dead are believed to guard and protect their descendants.) As Sutherland has written, a life that is lived in accord with romania and which encompasses ritual cleanliness, respect for the ancestral dead and other spirits, and certain foods, numbers, and colors is expected to bring baX (1975:282). To this I would add the various auspicious items described above, as well as increasing luck through matching "good with good," the basic premise being that like will create like.

But Machvaia have an expression, "Too good is no good." In terms of making luck, such is sometimes the case. Machvaia must look for luck in the dangers and uncertainty of America where, as they say — suggesting a deficit in American moral fiber—anything goes. Sometimes stepping outside romania, breaking Romani law, brings unexpected success. This seems to have worked for Sadie who runs the risk of the hospital to find her clients.

Sometimes disobeying parents will prove, in the long run, fortuitous. Toma, as I have mentioned, found happiness by refusing his father—a great sin which can involve the wrath of the dead—sticking with the mother of his six children, and adopting an unpretentious shirtsleeves lifestyle.

Sometimes running away to America works. Christine (Adams2/Pavlovich:35) followed her feeling for a handsome graduate student who was newly arrived from Iran and married him in secret. In the process of introducing him to American customs, she learned a lot about landlords and rentals. Now she is married to a Machvano and known for her successful fortune telling locations in the heart of San Francisco. Some of her ofisuria 'fortune telling offices' have been sold to other Roma who do not have Christine's luck of good credit. She makes money from sales and more money from clients. As she says, "Location is everything." If they knew, the Machvaia public would consider Christine's liaison with an outsider a criminal shame (ladzhav), a loss of respect and potential good luck. Because



Christine was cautious, her former marital situation never became general gossip. Why? "I'm lucky," she explained, grinning.

As has been mentioned, luck, like respect and purity, has to do with the power-filled, blessed, and what Machvaia consider sacred and auspicious. All these systems are believed to connect with happiness and success, but most directly with luck. Indeed, the experience of happiness or success is luck.

But luck is result oriented. It depends on outcome and, of the belief systems mentioned—purity, respect, luck—luck is the most relevant to the world at large, the most open ended. The experience of personal luck is what led Sadie, Toma, and Christine in unauthorized and new directions. Long ago, they say, a Merino who worked the carnivals bought the first Machvaia car. When Biga, Mila's young husband (Pavlovich/Adams1:20), saw it, he drove his parents crazy until they got him one. Today, the switch from horses to cars seems inevitable and the advantages patently obvious: increased mobility, ease of traveling, ease of access to the towns and cities where the women could tell fortunes. But then it was a matter of one Merino's personal luck that suggested the possibility to the others.

Novel adaptations usually relate to situations with outsiders. The ideology of luck usually encourages and protects custom and traditional values of romania. But convention has recently been challenged. Some of the Machvaia have become bornagain Christians. The new Christians believe saints' icons and fortune telling are sinful, that the dead are unavailable and powerless, that commensality at a *slava* (saint's day) or *pomana* (memorial feast) is a crime, and that only those baptized Pentecostal, like themselves, will go to heaven. The converted, although still welcome at Machvaia public events, are segregating themselves by marrying other Christians. According to Sutherland (1975:193-4), Roma society is designed to generate new vitsi. Should the tendency to segregation persist for several generations, the Pentecostals could splinter off and become the "Jesus vitsa," a prospect that certainly didn't seem to dismay Blensi, who couldn't imagine a heaven of angels but "without my family." He said, "So they get their own vitsa. Who cares? That must be their luck."

In the face of potential hazard and/or benefit, Machvaia maximize their life chances by protecting and keeping the good, which is their luck, baX. They take action in the fortuitous direction and hope for good results. The feeling of luck might, of course, lead anywhere. Intuition combines with belief in the baX po drom, 'luck found on the road, to afford the enterprising Gypsy wide possibilities for choice and chance-taking.

Historically, the preceding explains much about the Gypsy preference for escape rather than confrontation. The willingness to risk new ventures and to deliver themselves speedily from unpromising ones, the ability to leave the unpleasantness of the past behind and forget it, the unfolding powers and novelty of frequent lucky



new beginnings suggest how and why the Gypsies, so often strangers in foreign lands and beset by hostile circumstances, have persisted for a thousand years and occasionally prospered.

Notes

¹Since I began fieldwork with Machvaia, I have attended something like 100 public events with a special interest in belief and ritual. During most of those years, 1966 to the present, I have kept in touch with community activity via daily phone calls. I have lived with families and individuals affiliated with each of the nine major Machvaia groups for periods of several weeks to one year, the exception being the Los Angeles Stevens family. My fieldwork method is to gather material by the indirect and dogged means known to anthropologists as participant observation and then to ask specific questions of those who I think might know. I try to make these questions an exchange of some kind, my services for theirs. Roma (sing. Rom) is the self-designation of this group.

² The "Gypsy" social worker who only handles the Gypsy caseload, for example, often emphasizes this.

³Machvaia describe a *vitsa* variously as a bloodline, a lineage, lineage group, nationality, family, kind, and "generation to generation." In practice, Machvaia count as a vitsa their entire group (Machvaia), and use the same term for the units of cognatic kin composed of many extended families (Adamovich, Pavlovich) and headed by brothers. For the sake of economy, I tend towards "named lineage group."

⁴ The quotations in this article were either recorded or paraphrased. To provide a context, the initial use of an informant's name (names are changed, of course) is followed by the father's vitsa—Adams is short for Adamovich— the mother's father's vitsa, and the age of the informant.

⁵ The crime of refusing food approximates to incest and murder. (Indeed, in the past, refusing to share may have constituted murder.) This taboo is so strong that my friends are usually quite generous with the increasing numbers of non-Gypsy homeless we meet on the street.

⁶ The literature of India confuses the concepts of fate and karma. Over and over, fate and karma are reversed in the texts (O'Flaherty 1980: 24-7).

⁷ Other vitsi that are equally inbred may be hold the same opinion of themselves.

⁸ The anomaly of a Rom from another lineage group who was short, almost dwarf-sized, stingy, at least from the Machvaia standpoint, not particularly popular, but rich, puzzled a Machvano. He surmised that the ugly Rom might have made some kind of questionable pact with the Devil.



⁹ As Wadley points out, "Karma is not known, the future is not known.... No matter what, you will endure the consequences of past deeds." But "no one knows the results of previous acts" (1983:155).

¹⁰ In regard to the many kinds of Gypsies in the New York area, including a few Machvaia families, Gropper says, "Fate/luck...preserves the ego structure and the inherent human dignity of the individual at the same time that it affords a culturally approved mechanism for redirecting energies; the evaluation of the individual's skills remains unshaken, for they are merely held in temporary abeyance, ready to be called upon with confidence in the future" (1975:117–8).

¹¹ For many if not most Machvaia, gambling is a major source of entertainment. For a few the obsession with gambling has destroyed their family's luck.

¹² Regarding American Gypsies, Gropper writes that "any strong negative emotion, such as hate or envy, generates a disharmonic force field in the universe that attracts more disharmony (Americans would say 'evil'). ... Since all of us harbor negative emotions from time to time, it follows that...each of us is a potential 'witch.' ... No one is totally free of negative emotions" (1975:168).

¹³ See Sato 1988 for more about the Roma Pentecostal movement.

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Romani Naming as Multiple Strategies

Sarah Drue Phillips

Focusing on Kalderash and Machvaia Roma in North America, and drawing on the published literature, I compare Romani use of birth names, nicknames, vitsa names and pseudonyms to naming practices in Ireland, Spain, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Afro-America. While nicknaming and pseudonym use are practiced worldwide, they serve complex and even contradictory functions. Among some Kalderash and Machvaia in North America, nicknames reflect an individual's emergent identity; they simultaneously reinforce social hierarchies. Birth names and vitsa names underline group solidarity, and the use of pseudonyms allows one to disguise his or her identity from non-Roma. Romani naming systems are not entirely internal to Romani cultures; rather, external social conditions, outsiders' attitudes and state restrictions all contribute to the multiple naming systems of Roma.

Introduction

In this paper I will discuss the layered naming system of some North American Roma¹. I propose that naming practices among Roma reflect the ways in which social relations are culturally organized (Goodenough 1966:265). Additionally, I view personal names and modes of address as "cultural institutions most intimately linked with identity concerns" (Goodenough 1966:266); I show how the use of birth names (one's "true" name, given at birth or baptism), nicknames, vitsa (kin group) names, and non-Romani names serves to enforce shared values of both solidarity and individuality among Roma. I illustrate how the seemingly contradictory ideals of cooperation and competition are articulated and reconciled through Romani naming practices. I join Meyer Fortes in approaching names as "documents

Sarah Drue Phillips is a graduate student in cultural and medical anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (109 Davenport Hall, MC-148, Urbana, IL 61801). She plans to conduct dissertation research in Kiev, Ukraine on post-Chernobyl ideologies of health and strategies of healing.



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epitomising personal experiences, historical happenings, attitudes to life, and cultural ideas and values" (1955:349).

In keeping with my training in socio-cultural anthropology, my approach is one of crosscultural comparison. While Romani naming practices have been examined by several researchers (Sutherland 1975, 1994; Gropper 1975; Silverman 1979; M. Salo 1979), considerations of naming among North American Roma are rarely placed in a comparative framework. I show that certain aspects of Romani naming are not unique to Romani cultures, and I compare and contrast Romani naming with naming practices among minorities in regions of Spain, Ireland, Nigeria, and Tanzania. Such comparisons allow us to draw useful conclusions as to the functions of Romani naming practices and how Romani naming is affected by outside forces. I utilize this comparative data primarily in considerations of birth names and nicknames.

At the outset, I must emphasize that naming systems are not entirely internal to cultures; oftentimes, they are shaped by power relations between Roma and the bureaucracies of majority societies. Indeed, naming systems intersect with state restrictions; in the case of Roma, this interaction provides commentary on the power dynamics between diasporic minorities, such as Roma, and major bureaucracies.

This paper represents a literature review, since I have drawn upon data and opinions in existing literature. I do not wish to essentialize worldwide Romani naming traditions, since great variation exists between the practices of different groups of Roma. Most of my ethnographic data concerning Romani naming comes from the 1975 publications of Rena Gropper and Anne Sutherland; Gropper studied Kalderash and Machvaia in New York City, while Sutherland worked among Kalderash in "Barvale," California. Admittedly these sources are dated, having been published twenty years ago. Therefore, the information in this paper applies mainly to certain groups of Kalderash and Machvaia who lived in New York City and Barvale in the mid-1970s. Some of the data in this paper will not be applicable to the experiences of many Roma; I realize that many Roma in North America identify themselves by only one name—often an American name—in their daily lives, no matter with whom they are interacting.

Kalderash and Machvaia are two of several nations, or *natsiyi*, of Vlach Roma; others include the Lovara and the Churara (Fraser 1995:238).² The scholars' term *Vlach Roma* refers to the influence of Romanian on the language of this group and the 500-year stay of their ancestors in Romania (Fraser 1995:8). Sutherland writes that, "The distinctions between the various *natsiyi* include dialect differences and certain variations in custom and appearance, but these differences are not significant in terms of the social structure except that they are manifestations of the status of each *natsia*" (1975:10). Even so, I am reluctant



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to use an analysis of naming practices among particular groups of Kalderash and Machvaia to generalize about "Vlach" or "Romani," naming practices as a whole.

The Vitsa Name

The vitsa is a kin group that may include all the male and female descendants of a real or mythical male or female ancestor. Sutherland's informants translated the word "vitsa" as "generation" in the sense of "descendants," emphasizing the fact that the members of a particular vitsa have all been "generated" from a common source (1975:182). Membership in a vitsa is voluntary, and Roma may choose to belong to either their mother's or their father's vitsa. This choice may be reversed later in life; that is, a person choosing the vitsa of the father may later decide to "switch over" to the mother's vitsa (Sutherland 1975:182). One's membership in a particular vitsa reflects a voluntary association with certain of one's relatives. Oftentimes, then, the vitsa exemplifies what Firth has called "optative" descent systems, in which "choice may be legitimately exercised by what may be termed the 'membership candidate' "(1963:28).³ The vitsa name is the main indicator that one belongs to a certain vitsa. Sutherland tells us that "most vitsi names seem to be either derived from the names of a person or the word for an animal, a metal or wood, or some eating or elimination habit" (1975:195). Instead of treating it as a "name," per se, perhaps it is more accurate to view the vitsa name as a "label" or a "category." A Rom generally is not called by his or her vitsa name; rather, the label Kashtare, for example, identifies a Rom as a member of the Kashtare vitsa. Sutherland tells us that, in some cases, vitsa names are essentially meaningless for American Roma, and that recent arrivals to the United States "may be called by the name of the place they last stayed" (1975:197).

According to Liégeois, who studied various Romani groups in Western Europe, "The individual is what his membership of a given group makes him;" this membership is often marked by the vitsa name (Liégois 1987:38-39). Sutherland (1975) also presents the vitsa as a crucial unit of moral, political, judicial, and ritual identity. Since members of a vitsa are usually relatives, they share the mutual obligations and risks that come with kin ties. The reputations of members of a vitsa are directly affected by the behavior of fellow members; Sutherland writes that "like a bad reputation, wealth, prestige, and power eventually extend to most of the vitsa members" (1975:201). Vitsa membership generally entails a measure of cooperation between members. The vitsa can function as an important judicial unit, it is a political unit under the jurisdiction of a particular political leader, and vitsi sometimes gather for rituals such as funerals and death feasts, often traveling long distances to do so (Sutherland 1975:203). Members of a vitsa often side together



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against other vitsi in situations of conflict. The vitsa name can serve to discriminate friend from foe.

Therefore, the role of the vitsa as a source of cooperation and solidarity is clear. The vitsa name is a constant reminder of an individual's obligations to fellow vitsa members, reinforcing his value as a member of the kin group. The same sense of solidarity is embedded in the institutions of natsiyi (nations), kumpaniyi (economic unions), and familiyi (extended families). I have focused here on one unit of group identity, the vitsa, showing how the shared values of cooperation and group solidarity among Roma are marked by the labeling of vitsa members through vitsa names. Embedded in vitsa names are social relations and obligations, all of which reflect the value that Roma often place on group solidarity.

Nav Romano—The "Romani Name"

Upon initial examination, it would seem that the birth name, or *nav romano*, serves individualizing functions, reinforcing the specific identities of persons. Obviously, given names do serve this purpose. Additionally, however, certain types of birth names serve to solidify close relationships between individuals. Many Romani children are given an "official" Romani name as infants; for some, this name includes a first name and a patronymic or matronymic which identifies the person as the "son or daughter of so-and-so." According to Sutherland (1975:26), "Mara o Spirosko," for example, identifies Mara as the daughter of her father, Spiro; Drutz and Gessler (1990:36) indicate that "Govo la Kaljako" identifies Govo as the son of his mother, Kali. When birth names are used in this way, they automatically identify one's relationships to his or her relatives.

Related to this discussion is the preference among some Roma to name a child after the child's godparent (Gropper 1975:135). Anthropologists commonly regard the godparent-godchild relationship as a fictive kinship tie; among Roma, this special alliance begins at baptism and sets up a lifetime of mutual obligations between godparents and godchildren. Selection of godparents is taken very seriously by a child's parents, since the godparents will play a major role in the child's life. Gropper describes the criteria for good godparents: they are members of the same religious sect as the parents, they are influential and have high financial status, and they exhibit a positive attitude towards the child (1975:129). As the "major ritual practitioners" for their sponsored godchildren, godparents play an important role in the child's baptism, and they might eventually act as sponsors in their godchild's wedding (Sutherland 1975:178). In addition, a child's godparent is a person on whom he or she can rely throughout life. In fact, Gropper reports that children who quarrel with their parents may seek refuge in the home of their godparents (1975:135).



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It is not surprising that the meaningful godparent-godchild relationship is often solidified by naming a child after his or her godparent, an act that publicly marks the bond between the two social actors. The namesake relationship among Roma means that a junior can make requests of a senior and expect these appeals to be granted. Additionally, Gropper tells us that links between children and godparents may serve to create and cement relationships between two otherwise unrelated families, thus enlarging social networks (1975:78). Godparents may be relatives or non-relatives of the godchild and his or her parents, and they may be Roma or non-Roma (Sutherland 1975:177). Therefore, godparent-godchild ties may extend beyond Roma communities, often serving to create beneficial social ties between Roma and non-Roma.

I have shown how two particular forms of birth names—patronymics and namesakes—reflect one's membership within the social group. These personal names emphasize social relations, particularly those between children and their parents and godparents. Writing about the Lakalai of New Britain, Goodenough illustrates how "customs of naming...emphasize one's place in a procreational chain or in formally structured kin and social relationships" (1966:271). Among some Roma, namesakes and patronymics serve precisely this function. Like vitsa names, these particular forms of birth names define one's place in social networks, underline social relationships and obligations, and reflect the cultural importance of solidarity and cooperation. I now turn to a cross-cultural examination of nicknames, showing how the values of cooperation and obligation that we have discussed are counterbalanced by ideals that esteem individuality and the marking of social hierarchies. It will become clear how vitsa names, birth names, and nicknames, in the words of Goodenough, "serve to reinforce one set of public values that are in opposition to another set of public values" (1966:275).

Romani Nicknames

Although the nav romano ("true name") sometimes functions as an identifier in Romani families and societies, Sutherland tells us that her Kalderash informants often use nicknames—perhaps rude or insulting ones—when addressing family members and friends. Nicknaming phenomena merit cross-cultural consideration, since nicknaming is common practice worldwide, and the strategies and ideologies of nicknaming vary cross-culturally. Here I present data from several African and European societies, subsequently comparing this data with nicknaming among some North American Kalderash. These comparisons will allow us to understand better the functions and symbolics of nicknaming among Kalderash.

David Gilmore (1982) emphasizes the "highly-charged affective content" of nicknames among members of a small farming town in southwest Andalusia, Spain.



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In this community, nicknames may be given to entire families or to individuals, and nicknames are often derogatory. Community members are extremely sensitive to nicknames, which are used aggressively and privately in discussions of a third party. Nicknames are almost never used to the bearer's face; they are used for reference rather than for address. Gilmore concludes that nicknames verbalize hostilities between competing families and symbolize the "antagonism between the community as a whole and its constituent families" (p. 698).

Negative or unpleasant names are also found among the Kaguru of Tanzania and the traditional Asaba of Nigeria. Beidelman (1974) reports that a Kaguru is given many names during his or her lifetime. Oftentimes, these names are associated with negative qualities and experiences. Beidelman attributes this fact to the Kaguru's belief that "speaking of good fortune may lead one to lose it" (p. 289). Therefore, bestowing a negative name on someone protects him or her against adversity. Similarly, according to Isichei (1978), the traditional Asaba gave some babies spiteful names. These babies were labeled Ogbanje—babies which were born to a woman who had lost several babies consecutively. The Ogbanje was thought to be all of these babies and was accused of maliciously tormenting its parents by its repeated birth and premature death (p. 334). The suspected Ogbanje was given a spiteful name in order to preserve its life. An insulting name was said to challenge the baby, to "cause it to respond by having to live so as to prove that it was worth something" (p. 335). Therefore, among both the Kuguru and the Asaba, negative names have been used in a positive way; that is, bestowal of a negative name upon a child is a strategy to protect the child.

The use of rude and insulting nicknames has been explained in several ways. In his study of nicknames in Navanogal, Spain, a Castilian mountain village, Brandes (1975) echoes Pitt-Rivers' (1961) assertion that derogatory nicknames serve as a mechanism for social control. Brandes asserts that rude nicknames are used in small communities to regulate the individual and to ensure that he or she follows certain social rules. He writes that, in a closely-knit community such as Navanogal, public opinion as translated through the bestowal of an embarrassing nickname regulates individual behavior (1975:146).

When comparing Romani naming with naming and nicknaming practices among societies in Ireland, Spain, Nigeria, and Tanzania, we find both similarities and differences. Romani nicknaming practices seem to be an exception to Brandes' claim that there is a "near universal condemnation of [nicknames'] defamatory character and of the nicknaming practice in general" (1975:144). Among Roma, nicknaming is a socially agreed-upon and acceptable means of referencing one's fellows, whether or not a nickname is insulting. In fact, Roma often reference others by their nicknames more frequently than by birth names, and nicknames are not guarded from other Roma or used in private as they are among Gilmore's informants



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in Andalusia. I have not read about any strong sensitivities of Roma to particularly insulting nicknames. Among Roma, we see none of the "reversal" strategies of the Kuguru and the Asaba, who hope that giving their children derogatory names will protect them.

Among Roma, nicknames are given to young children by relatives or family friends (Drutz and Gessler 1990:53–55). Presumably, nicknaming occurs when a child begins to portray his or her distinct personality, and nicknames highlight some unique physical or personality trait that distinguishes the child from all others. Examples of nicknames among Sutherland's informants include "Blue Eyes," Kali (Blackie) and "Flicka" (Clever One) (1975:26). Since Roma children often receive their nicknames from relatives and family friends rather than from their parents, nicknaming can be seen to represent a sort of symbolic adoption of the child by the social group; the nicknamer or nicknamers are in effect saying, "This is our child now, and we will name him" (Alford 1988:84). This is meaningful in Romani societies where the rearing of a child is often largely a group effort. Therefore, nicknames often reflect and reinforce the child's emerging identity within the social group. Roma do not inherit nicknames from their familial predecessors, which attests to the fact that Romani nicknames are "personalized." Romani nicknames, which are frequently descriptive, often emphasize what is unique about an individual.

As a Rom grows older, his or her nickname might change. Just as a person and his or her experiences change, so does the nickname associated with that person. In this way, nicknames "keep up with the times," accommodating new personality traits, appearances, or events associated with a certain person. Oftentimes, "old" nicknames are not dropped, and a person may be known by several different nicknames simultaneously. In this way, nicknames can provide a record of one's own personal history.

Even as they underline one's individuality and uniqueness, Romani nicknames are representative of a certain intimacy between members of Romani societies. Roma generally are called by their nicknames only by those persons with whom they share a close personal relationship. In contrast to nicknaming in the African and European societies discussed above, Romani nicknaming is a positive phenomenon that marks intimate relationships. Calling one's fellow by a nickname conveys a certain message in Romani (and many other) cultures, saying "We are on nickname terms, which means that I know you well and that you can trust me."

Nicknames not only give clues as to who one's intimates are, they also reveal which persons are less close to an individual. Writing about nicknaming in a Spanish community, Brandes says, "In Navanogal, internal differentiation on the basis of voluntary bonds is an established part of the social order, and this differentiation is supported through nickname use" (1975:145). According to this thesis, nicknaming will occur especially often in societies which, like Romani societies, have a



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hierarchical social system. In such societies, nicknames are reflections of differential friendships. For example, not all members of the group (e.g. children) may have the right to address or refer to others (e.g. elders) by their nicknames; casual acquaintances will not know an individual's nickname. Differential "access" to others' nicknames among Roma may distinguish close from less close relations, and reinforce social hierarchies.

Alford asserts that, in societies where given names recur often, nicknames are used to serve differentiating and identifying functions (1988:83). It is not inconceivable that this process could be at work in the nicknaming practices of Roma. Nicknames may in fact be useful in differentiating between persons whose given names come from a limited pool of Romani (or non-Romani) names and, therefore, are frequently duplicated. However, such an explanation ignores the meaningful ways in which nicknames mark social relations. Nicknames separate intimates from non-intimates, providing social cues as to whom one should trust.

I now move to a discussion of the *nav gajikano*, or non-Romani name, examining ways in which state restrictions and major bureaucracies contribute to Roma's use of multiple non-Romani names and the concealment and shifting of identities.

Nav Gajikano

Sutherland reports that many of her informants, especially men, have one or more non-Romani, names (1975:26). Among Sutherland's Kalderash informants, non-Romani names are used for official documents and dealings with *gaje*, non-Roma. They are rarely used inside Romani circles; rather, they represent contact between Roma and non-Roma. I emphasize that I am speaking only about Kalderash Roma in Barvale, California, who served as Sutherland's informants in 1975.

As of 1975, most Roma in the United States were not registered at birth, in school, in the census, or with draft boards. In fact, "outside police records and welfare departments officially they did not exist" (Sutherland 1975:26). Roma who complied with registration requirements did so only nominally, registering names that were often not their own, and claiming to be any nationality but "Gypsy" (Sutherland 1975:26). In many instances, the taking of non-Romani names by Roma is a product of state rules and regulations regarding naming, rather than a matter of choice. Worldwide, non-Romani names are imposed upon Roma and other minority populations by legal restrictions related to baptism, registration and marriage. Therefore, it is important to recognize naming practices not only as cultural expressions, but as locales of state record-keeping as well.

However, non-Romani names can be used strategically by Roma. For example, Sutherland asserts that the number of non-Romani names that one



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possesses usually correlates with the number of difficult situations he or she has encountered with the law, or with the number of records that exists concerning him (1975:26). For each "difficult situation" with authorities, therefore, a given Rom may use a different non-Romani name. Oftentimes, the same nav gajikano is used by several members of a Romani group, a practice which serves to further confuse authorities. Sutherland writes:

I know personally three Miller Georges of the same generation, four Rosie Costellos in Barvale alone and at least three George Adams within one extended family. This is convenient for invisibility because even if one wanted to tell a non-Gypsy how to locate a person, it is very difficult given the *gaje* name alone. In one area there might be fifteen Rom by that name (1975:26–27).

It is not incorrect to equate the use of non-Romani names by Roma with the use of pseudonyms. A Rom's identity may be masked by the strategic employment of names from the host culture. Richard and Sally Price's study of Saramaka onomastics reveals similar strategies among the Saramaka of Surinam and the Gullahs of St. Lucia. Both minorities, like Romani societies, utilize a "highly selective use of names in order to deceive outsiders" (1972:359). The uses of pseudonyms among the three groups represent different central cultural values, however. Among the Afro-American cultures, name use is related to values such as decorum and play (Price and Price 1972:359), not secrecy and anonymity, which are often the bases of the uses of non-Romani names by Roma, Among Roma, multiple non-Romani pseudonyms may be used to conceal one's "true" identity. Sutherland asserts that, due to their persecution by outsiders, Roma "have developed elaborate mechanisms of secrecy and have hidden their identity in order to survive" (1994:79). This strategy is a result of historical and social processes and pressures, and it encapsulates the sometimes problematic interactions between Romani and non-Romani societies.

Sutherland has written about her informants' "borrowing" each others' American names and social security numbers. While this practice is seen by law enforcement officials as an illegal use of "false credentials," Sutherland writes that "the American idea that each individual has only one name...is contrary to [the] experience and culture [of Roma]" (1994:81). Here we see conflicting notions of the concept of "identification." Roma challenge the mainstream United States cultural assumption that one's name is a major part of the individual's personal identification. For Roma in the United States, descent and family ties are the defining factors for identity, and their American names often can be flexible and easily interchangeable.

The use of non-Romani names by Sutherland's informants reflects a different approach to "identity" than do the uses of vitsa names, birth names, and nicknames. We have seen how these latter types of names reflect the cultural importance of



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solidarity and individuality among Roma. They identify a given Rom's place within the group by situating him or her in a vitsa and a network of relations. In contrast, the manipulation of non-Romani names by some Roma reflects the complexities of Roma - non-Roma interactions in daily life. Romani use of non-Romani pseudonyms serves to obscure identities, allowing Roma, in the words of Carol Silverman "to remain nameless, concealed and untraceable by the gazhe" (1979:271).

Rather than viewing Romani and non-Romani societies as bordered and separate, I see Roma - non-Roma interaction as a part of both cultures. The uses of non-Romani names by Sutherland's informants portray Roma as active participants in non-Romani societies that are often hostile to them. Through the manipulation of non-Romani names to conceal and shift identities, Roma—a diasporic minority—are better able to navigate the unequal power relations between themselves and major bureaucracies. Roma should not be viewed as tricksters, but as social actors employing creative strategies to subvert unequal power relations.

Conclusion

I have shown how naming practices among certain groups of North American Kalderash aand Machvaia in Barvale, California and New York City serve to enforce shared values of solidarity and individuality. The four-layered system of naming among these Roma provides individuals with several names, some of which are used mostly inside the close-knit family circle, and some of which are employed primarily in dealings with non-Roma. We have seen ways in which names are cumulative; a given individual may be identified by several different names, all of which are valid and viable, but some of which are in obeyance to others. In certain situational contexts, some names cease to be operative, but do not cease to exist.

Our examination of Romani naming has revealed the complex ways in which social cues are embedded in different types of names. Viewing Romani names as dynamic structures with many meanings, I agree with other authors (Kendall 1980) that names can be read as texts. Behind every name a person possesses is a story, an event, or a social process. In his study of naming practices in Western Ireland, Richard Breen states that "...different elements of the name set express relationships that exist in separate contexts" (1982:711). The same is true for Romani names, some of which reflect internal Romani cultural values, others of which are responses to conflicts between Romani and non-Romani societies.

We have seen how different "layers" of Romani naming emphasize particular cultural values that are esteemed by Roma. Vitsa names identify one as a member of a kin group, encouraging solidarity and cooperation. Some types of birth names—patronymics and namesakes—locate an individual within the social group. Nickname use serves to reconcile the somewhat oppositional values of individuality



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and solidarity. While nicknames emphasize what is particular about an individual, nickname use groups persons who share close personal relationships. Finally, the varied uses of non-Romani names by some Roma demonstrate that Romani naming strategies do not occur in a vacuum, but are, in part, responses to gaje pressure and unfavorable social conditions. The various types of names used by Sutherland's and Gropper's informants do indeed represent documents "epitomising personal experiences, historical happenings, attitudes to life, and cultural ideas and values" (Fortes 1955: 349).

Notes

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- ¹ I use the term *Roma* to replace the general term *Gypsy*. This paper focuses specifically on the naming practices of Vlach Roma, more particularly on Kalderash and Machvaia in North America.
- ² Natsiya is the Kalderash term for "nation" or "race." Different terms are used by other Vlach Roma; Lovara, for example, use the term rasa (Fraser, 1995:238).
- ³ Disparate opinions exist as to the nature of the vitsa. Sutherland, for example argues that the vitsa is "in accordance with the cognatic principle of descent" (1975:182), while others have viewed the vitsa as a patrilineal descent group (Cotten 1955:21; Pickett 1966:8, cited in Sutherland 1975:182).

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The Little Girl and the Swarthy Beast

Božidar Jezernik

In 1995 a story with two Gypsy actors in the main roles was prominent in the Slovenian media. He (22 years old) had bought Her (age 12) in Kosovo and had kept her imprisoned afterwards in His home, abusing Her physically and sexually. He was also charged with unlawful imprisonment, personal injury, and having sex with a person under 14. But at court, aside from the last charge, the whole story was shown to be a pure construct. Public opinion was not prepared to face the facts and loud voices were raised against the sentence in the media, berating the judge as a second-class cultural anthropologist who has lost his compass. The story and its implications raises many important questions of a hierarchy of norms and values, of "non-disruptive otherness" in an age when multiculturalism is becoming the norm, and of chauvinism in the cultural construction of Otherness. On the other hand, it clearly shows that "the Gypsy" is not constructed solely by the majority, and that the Gypsy people play an important role in the process as well.

The following article discusses the issue of chauvinism and society's perceptions of what constitutes social "otherness." Press reports of an event which caused outrage among the Slovenian public at the end of 1995 will be analyzed as a means of exploring this subject. In an emotional debate triggered by the incident and the related court proceedings, a mass of associated questions arose about the hierarchy of norms and values and the acceptability of otherness in a period when multiculturalism is becoming a universal norm. The incident also raised a debate about whether the state should intervene in the customs of an ethnic community, and issues related to the relationship between the principle of the preservation of tradition and the principle of the protection of human rights.

Božidar Jezernik is Associate Professor in the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Ljubljana, Zevestiška 5, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; e-mail: bozidar.jezernik@uni-lj.si.



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The incident took place in 1995, when unusually for Slovenia, one of the main stories in the press was not concerned with politics. The main roles in the story were played by two Gypsies. In brief, the story as presented in the press was as follows: He (22 years old) had purchased Her (age 12) in Kosovo to be His wife, and had brought Her back to His modest home in Maribor in north-east Slovenia, where He subsequently inflicted various forms of torture, extinguishing cigarette butts on Her skin, cutting Her with a knife, a screwdriver and a broken beer bottle. In addition He bound Her and locked Her up. A doctor from the Maribor maternity hospital drew up a list of Her injuries. He concluded that Her life may have been endangered and that Her appearance had been marred and that this constituted actual bodily harm. The doctor reported all of this to the police.

The horrifying story spread rapidly through the media. *Jana*, a woman's magazine, retold the story in one of its issues, writing:

A twenty-year old man paid her parents according to custom and seemed to believe that as a result he could do exactly as he pleased with his new property.

The little girl at first found him agreeable, but he became increasingly violent and her life became more and more unbearable.

Events took a turn for the worse and her parents fetched her home on a number of occasions and she herself began to run away to take refuge with them, but her brutal husband always forced her to return to him. He often beat the little and weak girl, and her family and the police were powerless to do anything to protect her. Locked up in her room she experienced unimaginable monstrosities. Proofs of the brutal torture she underwent could be seen on her frail body. She was whipped with an electric cable, and she had scars caused by cigarette burns. Behind closed doors her husband threatened her to kill her and shouted that it was up to him with whom she would sleep (Kadilnik 1995).

The Slovenian public was enraged and disgusted. In an instant everybody recognized Him: a swarthy aggressive man, with dark hair and dark eyes, and even darker soul. Almost a real beast. Such a person cannot be tolerated in a civilized country like Slovenia.

Indeed, the prosecuting counsel was to indict Him of illegal imprisonment, of actual bodily harm and of sexually assaulting a minor under 14. According to the indictment, these crimes were committed by Him during July and August of 1995. He restricted Her freedom by forbidding Her to leave their home and by tying up Her arms and legs so that She could not escape from the house. Beside this, He also inflicted actual bodily harm on Her at some undetermined time between February and August 1995 by stabbing Her with a knife and a screwdriver and thus injuring Her on Her back, Her right shoulder and Her left temple, and burning Her hands, back and breasts with a cigarette lighter and cigarette butts. He also beat Her



with an electric cable, causing bruises to Her left thigh. The prosecution also indicted Him of having sexual intercourse with a person under 14 years of age. He was in custody awaiting the start of his trial for nearly three months. Everybody knew what the sentence would be. He would be found guilty and imprisoned, and Slovenia would continue business as usual.

However, this did not happen. Part of the indictment of actual bodily harm was withdrawn by the prosecuting counsel. In the opinion of a court expert, Maks Pen, all of Her scars, with the exception of a scar caused by an injury to Her left thigh, were inflicted prior to His acquaintance with Her. Some of the indictments of illegal imprisonment of the girl were also discovered to be based on tenuous grounds. The girl confessed that she invented the story herself because she was jealous of the way in which He flirted with other women. The confession was confirmed by a number of saleswomen from nearby stores. They said that the girl came to the shops a few times every week, and they remembered Her because of her bulging turnmy and because She was always smiling and pleasant. Her mother told the court that He had paid for Her virginity and that because of this He was allowed to take Her home. She added that her daughter lied frequently and that she was never sure when she should believe Her or not (Ravter 1995: 12).

The first story thus vanished into thin air. All that remained at the trial was the charge of sexually assaulting a young person. But on the grounds that the child in this case was His wife, the court bench of the criminal court in Maribor in its judgment of 13 November 1995 dismissed the case, and explained His action by stating that the defendant was unaware that He was committing a criminal offense. In His defense, the defendant said that sexual intercourse with adolescent Gypsies was not unusual and was an acceptable feature of their lifestyle. He also stated that seven of his sisters had married between the ages of 12 and 13, and that the eldest sister, Serbeza, who in 1995 was 17 years old and had three children, had become pregnant before her fourteenth birthday. This custom among Gypsies was confirmed by a social worker, Metka Vujčič, and by a pedagogical consultant, Jasna Kolarič. They explained that if a Gypsy girl gave birth at 13 or 14 years of age it was "nothing special," and certainly not "sensational" and that the Center for Social Work never reported Gypsies if they had sexual intercourse with persons under 14 years of age "because this was normal with Gypsies." Kolarič also clarified that "Gypsy children matured much faster than ours, and they already know all about sexual intercourse by the time they have reached the age of six." The court also heard the evidence of Jože Horvat, a representative of the Gypsy Society from Murska Sobota, who stated that the number of Gypsies living in Slovenia who conformed to legislation in this matter was minimal and most of them still behave in accordance with their own customs, which, of course, differ considerably from those of the Slovenian majority.



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According to Horvat, this intractability can be largely ascribed to the Gypsies who arrived from Kosovo, for they seemed to be "the most steeped in tradition" (Dežman 1995b).

From the legal point of view, the court was trapped between two points of law. According to the old Roman principle, ignorantia juris nocet means that a lack of familiarity with the law does not preclude criminal responsibility. In contrast to this, the principle of legal error pardons a defendant if the court is convinced that the defendant was unaware nor could have been aware that his or her conduct was prohibited by general moral, ethical and social aspects of humanity. The court took the view that in this case the defendant had made an excusable legal mistake and was unaware that sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 14 was a criminal offense.

The court arrived at this conclusion on the basis of His testimony and the testimony of experts on the lifestyle and customs of Gypsies. That is to say, the court was convinced by them that "one of the anthropological characteristics of Gypsies was their early sexual maturity, to which also their lack of knowledge and understanding of a sense of the prohibition of sexual intercourse with children, that is to say, persons under the age of 14, was linked." According to the findings of the court,

This cultural peculiarity does not represent a conflict in the Gypsy community itself nor in their relationship with the wider cultural environment which, in essence, has tolerated such sexual customs since the Gypsies settled in Slovenia. It has been obvious that no harmful consequences have resulted from it and that because of the number of anthropological and social peculiarities of the Gypsy community, such acts, in terms of the danger they represent or their social significance, do not signify a criminal act, which automatically precludes the possibility of a criminal offense in the sense of Article 14 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Slovenia. That is to say, this Article states that such an act is not punishable, although by law it has specific indications of being a criminal offense, and is understood by the court as "an acceptable otherness which should be tolerated by a democratically oriented society."

The court also referred to the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, which states that all persons have the right to express affiliation with their nations or ethnic communities, to nurture and express their cultures.

"A part of culture is made up of value systems," the president of the court bench, Zlatko Dežman, explained in the press, "and part of these value systems is obviously sexual practice. Democracy is a social order which stresses the respect due to non-disruptive otherness." As Judge Dežman stated, they could have concluded differently. They could have told Him coldly and formally that in the Republic of Slovenia the penal code must be adhered to and that it holds for everyone without exception and that he was, despite being "a Gypsy from Albania,"



answerable for these crimes. But in the judge's opinion the court would have to ask itself if it was violating His human rights by ruling in this way, because a sentence such as this would "brand him as someone different or alien and because of formal reasons, the legal code would have been abused" (Mehle 1995: 42). Judge Dežman was also convinced that he had judged in favor of love.

Some do not understand the role of the penal code. This is an extreme means to which society has access and which is applied to those cases when coexistence in society is critically threatened and cannot be restored without repressive measures. And I ask myself whether the penal code is a suitable social tool at the end of the twentieth century for repressing the expression of love (Mehle 1995: 43).

The acquittal received a patently negative reaction from the Slovenian public; it "resounded like a bomb." The survey firm Ninamedia carried out a survey on 22 November 1995 in which 395 people responded to the following question.

Not long ago the court in Maribor tried a Gypsy who had bought himself a 12-year old girl and then treated her cruelly. The court explained that the Gypsy was acquitted because of the ethnic and cultural characteristics of Gypsy life. What decision on the part of the court would you have deemed correct?

As many as 79% were of the opinion "that the court should have kept strictly to the letter of the law" and only 12% believed that it "should have considered the ethnic and cultural customs and characteristics of life" (Mehle 1995: 44).

Hence the ruling which should have brought a happy ending to a tragic story became its main point of contention. Angry protests were voiced in the media: how could this be possible? Typically the critics of the sentence clung to the information that had been released initially, although the court findings had discovered that it was untrue. The story fulfilled all the stereotypes and prejudices that existed in people's minds about Gypsies. For example, numerous non-governmental organizations and the government Office for Women's Politics addressed a "heated letter" to the public entitled "When Torture is Not Torture," in which they accused the court of condoning the torture of women and children. A letter published in the *Slovenske Novice* on 18 November 1995 stated:

We have followed the events in the Maribor court with amazement and disgust. The court bench in this county court, presided over by Zlatko Dežman, has pardoned a 22 year old Gypsy who maltreated (beat, cut and burned) and sexually abused a 13 year old girl whom he had purchased to be his "wife." The girl gave birth to his child this year, after having been tortured and isolated in the home of the accused.

The fact that the prosecuting counsel had withdrawn parts of the indictments because there were no realistic grounds for them was also ignored by author Spomenka Hribar. She was even more guilty of interpreting the real events in the



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light of existing prejudices against the Gypsy tradition than were the institutions mentioned above. In Slovenian folklore Gypsies are depicted as child-robbers and child-torturers. Hribar adapted the story so as to desexualize the victim by making Her a bit younger than She actually was, a "ten year old girl."

We have learned from the newspapers of the court proceedings against an Albanian Gypsy who had bought a ten year old girl of the same race and whom he proceeded to rape over a two-year period, beating her with an electric cable, cutting her skin, putting out cigarettes on her body... (Hribar 1995:36).

After the public had finally accepted the fact that the part of the story where the alleged violence inflicted on the "helpless child" was unfounded, the critics began to search for other reasons to protest the sentence. Now, the court was accused of having based its decision more on "amateurish cultural-anthropological arguments than on professional legal grounds" (M. Jezernik 1995). It is interesting and typical that a considerable degree of xenophobia was evident in these arguments. The first was expressed in the opinion of the editor of the *Slovenske Novice* in his regular editorial commentary published on 16 November 1995:

Marvelous! When, for example, enough orthodox Arabs collect in Slovenia, soon to become a safe haven for eastern ethnic groups on their march to the European West, our government will not lift a finger when the Muslim gentlemen begin to sever hands and cut off ears for petty crimes, because punishing them would be in contravention of the Maribor logic. We shall also respond "democratically" when some newly established Slovene, in compliance with the customs of his homeland, has a harem full of circumcized girls, wears Negro golden nose rings, and binds girl's feet like the Japanese.

Our courts will be quiet as mice when the cannibals from the islands of Fiji and Sumatra settle and multiply their numbers under the Alps. If they eat one of their own no steps will be taken against them because of Slovenia's constitutional respect for ethnicity and if some Slovenian were to end up in one of their pots, then nor would that be an insurmountable problem. We cannot deny people the right to eat. The Republic of Slovenia is a country in which the lawwould allow the renowned author Salman Rushdie to be reached by an ethnic curiosity, namely an arrow discharged in Iran (Bauer 1995a).

Shortly thereafter a further example was given by an expert in the field of social psychology:

In accordance with such logic we would permit emigrant Hindu fundamentalists to burn widows along with their deceased husbands (suttee); allow emigrant Islamic fundamentalists to circumcize adolescent girls, and the emigrants from Papua New Guinea to preserve their cannibalistic traditions and to kill and eat neighbors who do not belong to their tribe. There are too many examples to be able to mention them all (M. Jezernik 1995).



The critics opposed the use of the constitutional provision for "non-disruptive otherness" and for the allowance in the penal law made for a lawful mistake:

The claim is of course horrifying. First we are told that for some judges and, as it seems, also for some world famous legal experts, so-called ethnic otherness is above the law of a sovereign state. Although this non-disruptive ethnic otherness buys a child as though she were a cow or a pig, then allows her to become pregnant with her own unwanted child. The second, to which one cannot agree at all, is the judge's view that the Gypsy, naively wrapped in ethnic cotton-wool, does not even have to familiarize himself with Slovenian laws. That he does not adhere to them has been a long-established fact in any case (Bauer 1995b).

It made no difference that the court had not acted arbitrarily, as many were convinced, but it had instead based its ruling on the law and on the testimony of witnesses and court experts. The thread of all the protest arguments was that His behavior was inadmissible even if a Gypsy girl and their customs were concerned; that is, that the defendant should have been punished at any rate.

In laymen's terms, we could conclude that this dispute should have been treated according to the laws of the country in which it occurred; the torture of a wife purchased as if she was a slave when she was still in essence a child. That is to say that because this happened in Slovenia, Slovene legislation should apply (Lorenz 1995).

I know from talking with the judge that he was convinced that his decision was correct, and that he expressly chose to restrain himself from applying the penal law which was so easily available to him. In his opinion a democratic country must tolerate "non-disruptive otherness," not lash out with penal repression (Mehle 1995: 43). The application of penal repression seems to Dežman to be particularly unsuitable for quashing the manifestations of love. In an open letter dated 24 November 1995 he expressed his viewpoints by asking the following question to the president of the government Office of Women's Politics: "Do you truly believe that penal law on the threshold of the 21st century is a suitable tool for the repression of love simply because we are not prepared to accept a different culture and its permutations of love?" (Dežman 1995a).

As Judge Dezman stated when he came as a guest to my seminar, he firmly believed that the Gypsy was unaware and that he was not required to be aware that Slovenian law forbade sexual intercourse with a person under 14 years of age. Neither did the critics of the ruling doubt that he truly did not know of this, although His lawyer stated in an interview that for a Gypsy a lie "was not something amoral but a method of survival" (Ravter 1995: 12). We know that everyone was of the opinion that Gypsy norms are different from those of the "civilized world" and that "we cannot judge them according to our standards" (Ravter 1996: 21).



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I think differently. I think that Gypsies should not be judged by different standards, because in doing so we discriminate against them as uncivilized, as Judge Dežman did when speaking about the defendant as "a Gypsy from Albania." In Slovenian, Albania is almost synonymous with an uncivilized land. The existing legislation also defines the boundaries of freedom, and by tolerating such a violation, we are not only invalidating the jurisdiction itself but at the same time we are marginalizing the violator, we are pushing him/her to the edge of society. I also believe that it is not true that Gypsies are unaware of the positive aspects of legislation which forbids sexual advances to a person under the age of 14. I am convinced that they are familiar with this provision, but that they choose not to respect it, which has been clearly demonstrated in this case. The Gypsies are not buying wives, but are paying for their virginity. And this is not cheap. In our case Her parents demanded DM 50,000 for the privilege. However He had paid only DM 11,000, and it is because of this that the story reached the public. The court discovered that He was reported to the officials by his father-in-law, who wanted to take revenge for His failure to pay all the money, and that he had selected as his avenger the state legal institution, whose official responsibilities must include the protection of the freedom and personal integrity of the individual, as well as the sexual inviolability of persons younger under 14. Usually Gypsies resolve their disputes within their own communities and, as was revealed by His lawyer, this particular problem was later resolved within the Gypsy circle (Rayter 1995: 12).

In judging Gypsies according to "their own standards" we can perceive a certain symbiosis between the chauvinism of the ruling culture and the the Gypsy way of earning a living. The chauvinism of European society explains its attitude to the Gypsies by its belief that Gypsies were vagabonds because they had no permanent residence. Nor were they able to have one, since the landlords chase them off their land—because they were vagabonds. In other words, Gypsies were gypsies because gypsies were Gypsies (see B. Jezernik 1979). In spite of the fact that Gypsies in Europe have long been persecuted, they do have some value as a mirror to society. The Europeans who thought of themselves as civilized needed an antithesis so that they could recognize and affirmed their self-perception. This contrast seems to exist clearly in the case of the Gypsies who were seen as "the children of nature," or "the people of freedom." The Gypsies, who have been learning for centuries that they can find their place on this earth most easily if they adapt to the demands of the environment, adopted an image that was forced upon them by the rest of the world as a kind of protective mask. Then, the otherness of the Gypsies in many cases was nothing other than social mimicry. On the one hand, if the Gypsies felt pressured by the rest of society they themselves may have instituted this notion of otherness as a feature of their identity. On the other hand this concept strongly attracted Europeans by a kind of Pygmalion power; all the more

so because it represented nothing but an image of their own suppressed nature (B. Jezernik 1993: 169).

During the course of the centuries the Gypsies became accustomed to the fact that it was the position of otherness that allowed them to survive, for they could permit themselves many liberties which were not permitted to the members of the rest of society. It is true that their position was not particularly enviable, but it was relatively safe. To illustrate how this mechanism works, let me use an example which I witnessed in 1978 during my army service. A rifle fell accidentally out of the hands of a Gypsy. The commander of the troops wanted to take advantage of the situation in order to teach this negligent person some "army discipline." He began to scream at him, asking him if he knew where he was. The Gypsy calmly replied that he did not, because he was illiterate. The officer believed that the Gypsy was ignorant indeed and decided to ask him in a different way. He asked him, "Do you know the name of your supreme commander?" At the time this was Tito; a fact which was known throughout the world. But the Gypsy answered calmly that he did not know; he was illiterate. His reply fueled the officer's anger. Without concealing that he was really now trying to catch the Gypsy out he continued, "Do you know what your father's name is?" He received a blunt negative reply. Clearly convinced that the Gypsy really did not know the name of his father because with Gypsies one could never be sure about that, he asked, "And your mother?" The Gypsy once again calmly replied that he did not know. The officer was less satisfied with this answer, but since he was firmly resolved to come to the end of this, he barked, "Who brought you up?" When told that the Gypsy was brought up by his grandfather, he wanted to hear the grandfather's name. The Gypsy once again replied that he did not know. The officer was amazed. "You don't know?" The Gypsy told him that his guardian had died. The officer abandoned his questioning and the Gypsy's military training came to an end. Once the officer was out of earshot, all the Gypsies burst into laughter and enjoyed the officer's infinite stupidity.

The court took the stance that a democratically oriented society must protect otherness. This is why we should ask ourselves what kind of otherness it was protecting. An expert on Gypsy life in Slovenia commented on the Gypsy way of life in an interview for the magazine 7D:

Many live in what we would understand to be primitive circumstances without electricity, in shacks or under a plastic cover, as they do in Žabjek and Kanižarica. They mature early, become so to speak independent at 12 or 13, particularly the girls. For this reason there have always been problems with schooling. They attend the lower classes, but then stop (Ravter 1996: 21).

The Gypsies are depicted in the Slovenian media only in their extreme forms, that is to say only when their appearance confirms Slovenian prejudices about their



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otherness or their non-Slovenian character. We have seen that this behavior is so deeply embedded that even those who have the best intentions cannot evade the current social framework. The Gypsy image is a stereotype and is burdened with the prejudices of their cultural otherness and notions of inferiority which serve above all as a measure for affirming the superiority of the Slovenian culture. On the other hand, the Gypsies themselves contribute to this established image, exploiting it for their own ends because in the short term it allows them certain liberties inaccessible to the majority. In the long term, however, by widening the gap between them and their environment, it only exaggerates their Otherness.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Winchester Confessions 1615–1616: Depositions of Travellers, Gypsies, Fraudsters, and Makers of Counterfeit Documents, Including a Vocabulary of the Romany Language. *Alan McGowan, ed.* South Chailley, UK: Romany and Traveller Family History Society (c/o Janet Keet-Black, 6 St. James Walk, South Chailley, East Sussex BN8 4BU, UK), 1996. 32 pp. £3.75 including world-wide airmail (paper). ISBN 1-900660-01-6.

Peter Bakker

This brochure consists of the publication of a recently discovered early document about fraudulent passes and other travel documents. In the depositions, which were taken in 1615 and 1616 in Hampshire, England, many people confess to which persons they know who are using false passes, and they seem to betray easily the names of those who forge such passes.

The text shows that there was a lively trade in falsified versions of the documents which allowed poor people to travel in order to look for new places of employment. In the 16 pages of transcribed text, roughly a hundred names are mentioned of beggars, travelers, and especially of the people from whom they had obtained their false papers. These depositions often contain vivid descriptions of their appearance, which remind one of the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch.

Since I am not an historian, it is difficult for me to judge the historical value of the document. Apart from one confession, Gypsies seem to play a very minor role in the booklet. None of the names belongs to the more familiar names of the Romanichals, and there is no mention of a foreign origin or language. A few "canting" words are included in the depositions, none of which is Romani.

Certainly the most sensational part of the book is a Romani word list of some 130 words. These, also referred to as "canting words," were given by one Walter Hindes, who was arrested in the company of "counterfeitt Egyptians." His

Peter Bakker teaches at the Institute for General Linguistics, University of Amsterdam, Spuistraat 210, 1012 VT Amsterdam, Netherlands.



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confession is the only one in which "Egyptians" are mentioned. He had spent three months in their company. His word list shows that the language of the British Gypsies was already in the 17th century the mixed language that is known from almost all the 19th and 20th century sources. The English sentence "goe beate the Cow," for instance, is translated as "coore the Gorife." These data are among the oldest for Romani and therefore of prime importance for historical linguistic studies. It is further striking that none of the "canting" words mentioned in the text is found in the Romani word list, and the other way around. For instance, "house" is ken in Cant and carry in Romani, as it is today. This suggests that Cant and Romani were clearly separate languages spoken by different groups.

The document is introduced briefly (less than two pages) and sparsely annotated by editor Alan McGowan. There are further good indexes of key words as well as of names of places (including bars) and persons.

The Art of the Lautar: The Epic Tradition of Romania. Margaret H. Beissinger. Harvard Dissertations in Folklore and Oral Tradition. New York: Garland, 1991. 186 pp. \$44.00 (paper). ISBN 082402897X.

Carol Silverman

This compact volume has rightly become the classic study of *lautari*, Gypsy epic singers of south-central Romania and their texts. Based on her 1984 Harvard University Ph.D. dissertation, which was in turn based on fieldwork and archival research of over a year (1979–1987), folklorist Beissinger weaves together in clear and readable prose an analysis of the history, composition process, and artistry of lautar epics. She defines epics as "story told in song" (p.41), usually heroic in content, telling of "captivity and rescue as a perpetual human struggle to restore order and ensure the continuity of life" (pp.46–47).

Inspired by Albert Lord's study of Serbo-Croatian epics in Yugoslavia (Beissinger was a student of Lord's), the book's focus is on the oral composition of epics in terms of Milman Parry's oral-formulaic theory. Basically, Beissinger investigated to what degree and in what ways lautari relied on formulas as they composed orally. She finds that the epics are highly formulaic but "the formulaic density of the repertoires of individual singers varies considerably" (p.81). Beissinger goes beyond structural analysis to explore the artistry of a good story; she claims epic singing involves "more than simply a mechanical recitation of verses. It entails

Carol Silverman is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Folklore, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, USA.



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resourcefulness and creativity within the context of formulaic composition, imagination in the delivery and ornamentation of the narrative, and sensitivity in the merging of text and music" (p. 155).

Particularly noteworthy for those interested in Gypsy studies are sections on history, occasions for performance, and acquisition and transmission of the art. The history section highlights the period of Gypsy slavery and the development of a professional class of singers. Beissinger also explores the decline of epic singing in the 20th century. She bravely criticizes the racism of some Romanian folklorists who wrote of lautari but never gave Gypsies the credit they deserved for this art. This relates to the "paradox of the lautari" (p.15), namely that they are "second-class citizens" at the same times as being "perpetuators of venerated traditional culture" (p.16).

The chapter on "Learning the Art" and the sub-section on contexts of performance (such as weddings and other life-cycle celebrations) offer valuable insights into the exploitative economic and social relationships between lautari and peasants. Comparisons are also made between epics performed by professional lautari and those performed by non-professional peasants. Perhaps the most interesting parts are when Beissinger tells of her ten informants' lives and experiences (of the ten, some were dead and she thus relied on archival materials). I wished she had expanded the life history approach and also included reflections on her choices and problems in fieldwork.

The Art of the Lautar, unfortunately, does not cover the musical aspect of epic singing. There are neither musical analyses of the epics nor contextual descriptions of the rich instrumental repertoire of the dance music characteristic of this region of Romania. Romanian ethnomusicologists have published on lautar music, but there is little available in English. With its focus on text, context, and creativity, Beissinger's book is extremely valuable for scholars of Gypsy studies, for Balkan specialists, and for comparative folklorists who specialize in epic.

Correspondence

In his review of my Českoslovenští Romové v letech 1939–1945 (JGLS 5, 6: 107–111) and report on other books which I have devoted to the discrimination against and persecution of Czechoslovak Roma during the Nazi occupation, Paul J. Polansky made a number of biased judgments to which I am forced to respond by the following observations.

In the book Nad osudem českých Cikánů v Letech 1939–1945 [On the Fate of the Czech and Slovak Gypsies 1939–1945] (Brno: Univerzita J. S. Purkyně, 1981), I did not conceal, as Polansky writes, but rather contributed to the uncovering of an unknown holocaust. This book was the subject of scholarly reviews both in then-Czechoslovakia and abroad: Českoskovenský časopis historický 30(3): 466–467 (1982); Časopis Matice moravské



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101(1-2):190-191 (1982); Demografie 24(2): 187-188 (1982); Český lid 70(3): 184-186 (1983); Historický časopis 31(1): 119-121 (1983); Études Tsiganes 28(3): 43 (1982); Lacio Drom 18(2-3): 80 (1982); Newsletter of the Gypsy Lore Society 8(1):4 (1985).

Since the first printing was completely sold out shortly after its appearance, I set myself to preparing a second, expanded edition under the title Českoslovenští Romové v letech 1939–1945 [Czechoslovak Roma, 1939–1945], which Masaryk University in Brno was able to publish only in 1994, thanks to the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. This new printing has been altogether sold out and has also received positive reviews.

In preparing both the first and second editions of this work I made use of all accessible research materials. I reject Polansky's suggestion that I passed over blank spots in the literature and particularly in the primary sources to engage in reckless hypotheses through which this scholarly work would have become a bald work of fiction.

There is nothing in Polansky's assertion that the archives of the Gypsy camp at Lety, in the State District Archive in Třeboň, are a mere camouflage for what happened. The author of this assertion reached his daring conclusion after one week's study of the extensive written sources, which have still not been cataloged and made available by the archival employees.

Polansky confuses interwar Czechoslovakia, the post-Munich Sudentenland, Czecho-Slovakia, and the supposedly autonomous Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Furthermore, his position weakened by these errors, he then juxtaposes the number of Czechoslovak Roma, according the the 1938 estimate of The New York Times, with the number of Roma in the Protectorate, as determined by the files of the Interior Ministry in 1940 and confirmed two years later in a precise census which no Rom could have escaped.

To Polansky's accusation that I never explain how the Roma came to the Czech lands, and that I do not mention the anti-Roma measures of the period from the 15th century to the breakup of Austria-Hungary in 1918, suffice it to point to my textbook, Romové v České republice včera a dnes [Roma in the Czech Republic, Yesterday and Today] (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 1995), which has reached a third edition and in which I devote chapters 3, 4 and 6 to these subjects.

In the system of *Nazi* concentration camps, spread over the entire territory of the Reich and the rest of occupied Europe, including the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Gypsy camps represented a special category, in which Romani families were imprisoned, tortured, and terrorized and in which many of their members perished. To this category belongs the Gypsy camp at Lety, which was not, however, either an extermination facility, as Polansky is attempting to prove, or a work camp, a term Polansky inserts into my descriptions of the Lety camp, which I have thus far never indicated anywhere was a work camp. This would have contradicted what we know about the system of concentration camps from recent works by German historians and American sociologists.

In his interviews for the American and Czech press, the Voice of America and Radio City Iowa, Polansky states that 8000 Roma from Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia were imprisoned in the camp at Lety, of whom half were purportedly murdered by Czech guards and the other half transported to the Gypsy camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This fabrication is refuted on the one hand by the capacity of the Lety camp, where 1256 Roma from the



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Bohemian part of the Protectorate passed through barracks constructed for 300 and later for 600 persons (Polansky has forgotten that there was a Gypsy camp constructed at Hodonín for Roma from Moravia, while the territory of the former Silesia was then administered as part of the Sudentenland), and on the other hand by data contained in *The Memorial Book: The Gypsies of Auschwitz*, which lists the names of 4493 prisoners from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, of which 420 had been prisoners of the Gypsy camp at Lety. Lists are published in my *Andr'oda taboris: Vězňové protektorátních táborů 1942–1943* [The Prisoners in the Gypsy Camps of the Protectorate, 1942–1943] (Brno: Městský výbor Českého svazu protifašistických bojovníků, 1987); and my *Aušvicate hi kher báro: Čeští vězňové cikánského tábora v Osvětimi II - Brzezince* [The Czech Prisosners of the Gypsy Camp at Auschwitz II - Brzezince] (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1992).

A list of the guards at Lety who killed Romani children does not exist, since this crime was constructed only out of Polansky's poetic fantasy. However, all the lists and duties of the camp staff have been preserved, from which I have cited the names, functions, and activities of the camp leadership, as well as the numbers of the guards, who were all unfortunately and shamefully of Czech nationality. These are indicated in my Andr'oda taboris: Tragédie cikánských táborů v Letech a v Hodoníně [The Tragedy of the Gypsy Camps at Lety and Hodonín] (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1995), pages 11–15.

Polansky's charge that I knew but never spoke with Romani former prisoners is false. I have published authentic and authorized, rather than adapted and anonymous, recollections of prisoners in an extensive collection, *Našti bišteras: Nemůžeme zapomenout* [We Cannot Forget] (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 1993), and employed their testimony both in the book reviewed (see the list of survivors interviewed on pages 201–202) and in the textual analysis of a celebrated Romani song from Auschwitz, which I carried out with the ethnomusicologist Dušan Holý, and published as Žalující píseň: O osudu Romů v nacistických koncentračních táborech [Song of Lamentation: On the Fate of the Roma in Nazi Concentration Camps] (Brno: Ústav lidové kultury ve Strážnic, 1993).

It follows from the above observations that the reviewer either does not know or does not want to know the published results of my research.

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A Concise Grammar of West Bulgarian Romani

Michael Minkov

This paper represents a concise description of the grammar of non-Vlax West Bulgarian Romani exemplified by the dialect of Sofia and, occasionally, by the dialect of Rakitovo. The importance of these two closely related idioms is evident from their dominant role in government-sponsored teaching materials for Romani children in Bulgaria as well as from the existence of substantial written records (folklore) in both idioms.

Introduction

This paper presents the grammar of non-Vlax West Bulgarian Romani, the likely precursor of the literary norm of Romani as used in Bulgaria.

Although publications in or about Romani are still scarce in Bulgaria, the few existing ones suggest that some closely related Western dialects, the most prominent of which is that of Sofia, are emerging as the literary standard. Most importantly, school primers for Romani children and handbooks for teachers of Romani as a native language, published or approved by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, and used in Bulgarian schools, are based to a large extent on the dialect of Sofia (Aliev 1992, Kjuchukov 1992, Malikov 1992). The only other dialect that has received more or less significant coverage in teaching materials is that of Rakitovo, a village near Velingrad. This can be explained by the existence of a large collection of folklore materials in the Rakitovo dialect gathered by Yosif Nunev, a local teacher, which are suitable for use in school books. Most of the materials in that collection however have not yet been published. This analysis is based on the teaching materials and folklore collection, as well as on oral sources.

Michael Minkov was formerly Assistant Professor of the History of the English Language and Old Norse Language and Literature, University of Sofia, Bulgaria. Mailing address: Pension Sres, ul. Nedeljska vas 12, Mlaka pri Kranju 4000, Slovenia; e-mail: MISHO@iedc-brdo.si.



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The dialects of Sofia and Rakitovo differ to some extent in vocabulary. Structurally, they are nearly identical and display only minor differences in phonology and morphology while sharing the same syntax. Thus, they could be considered as two version of one and the same dialect. Nevertheless, for the sake of precision this paper focuses on the dialect of Sofia. The phonological and morphological peculiarities of the Rakitovo dialect (as reflected in Nunev's unpublished collection) are only occasionally mentioned.

Although the currently accepted orthography of Romani in Bulgaria is based either on English or on the Bulgarian version of the Cyrillic alphabet, this paper makes use of an international spelling system explained in the chapter on phonology.

The study of the emerging literary norm of Romani in Bulgaria (Sofia Romani, perhaps with some elements of the Rakitovo dialect) is interesting for several reasons. Notwithstanding their remote Indic origin, it seems that most, if not all, types of Modern Romani have their roots firmly in the Balkans. Typologically, Sofia Romani is a typically Balkan idiom and is therefore useful for reference. In addition, it is relatively archaic and has some of the oldest written records in any type of Romani, with texts from the first quarter of the 20th century, the folktales collected by Bernard Gilliat-Smith (1909, 1910a, 1910b, 1911a, 1911b, 1912a, 1912b, 1913a, 1913b, 1913c).

Sofia Romani was studied by Kiril Kostov in the 1960s (Kostov 1962, 1963). However, his rare works have never been available in Bulgaria. Thus, the present grammar represents a fresh start.

1. Phonology

The spelling principles that the reader should note are:

The spelling is morphophonemic (not phonemic or allophonic) which is consistent with standard Romani orthography in Bulgaria. The letters ξ , ζ , δ represent consonants similar to English s in pleasure, English ch in child and English sh in ship. The combinations ph, th, kh, d represent aspirated d, d that are usually considered to have phonemic status. The combination d represents an affricate similar to English d in d in

1.1. Vowels

1.1.1. Articulation



All vowels are articulated as in Bulgarian, that is i, e, a, u, o are articulated more or less as in the continental European languages (German, Spanish, Italian). The central vowel y is similar to u in English hurt.

1.1.2. Major Phonological Changes

1.1.2.1. Raising

As in Western Bulgarian, unstressed a and o are raised and tend to merge with y, and u, but unstressed e does not normally merge with i. Thus, the nominative form dad 'father' is pronounced |dat| whereas the oblique form dades tends to be pronounced |dyd'es|.

1.1.2.2. Vowel Harmony Rounding

In the dialect of Rakitovo, e is rounded to o before -r and -l. The rounding has assumed a morphophonemic character: it occurs, for instance, if these root-final consonants are followed by the morphological ending -o, but not if they are followed by an ending that contains the front vowels i or e.

Sofia	Rakitovo	
per'o	por'o	'his/her own' (masc. possessee)
per'i	peri /pyr'i/	'his/her own' (fem. possessee)
perlo /pel'o/	porl'o (pul'o)	'he fell'
perli /pel'i/	perli /pyľi/	'she fell'
gel'o	goľo	'he went'
gel'i	geli /gyľi/	'she went'
šer'o	šor'o	'a head', nom. sing.
šer'es	šeres /šyr'es/	'a head', oblique sing.
šeľo	šoľo	'a rope', nom. sing.
šeľes	šeles /šyľes/	'a rope', oblique sing.

The dialect of Sofia has apparently borrowed forms with vowel change such as morl'o /mol'o/ or /mul'o/ 'he died' (instead of *merl'o from mer- 'to die') from dialects with vowel harmony. It is also possible to explain root variation such as mer-/mor- as an instance of Indoeuropean vowel gradation but there are not enough examples to support this.

1.2 Diphthongs

As Romani has borrowed words from various related and unrelated languages, a variety of diphthongs may be observed. Most of them however have a marginal status since they appear in interjections, uncommon words, etc. Of the more or less common diphthongs, the following should be noted:



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ai, as in English (General American) 'I' in some words of Indic and other origin: kai 'where', thai 'and', h'aide 'let's', etc.

oi, ei, as in English (General American) 'boy', 'play', as in some words of Bulgarian or other origin: voin'ikos 'a soldier', p'eika, 'a bench', etc.

1.3. Semivowels

The Sofia dialect could be considered to have one front semivowel noted i in this grammar. It occurs mostly medially as in $hal\underline{i}$ as 'he/she ate', seldom initially and never finally. It is articulated as English y in yes, but it palatalizes the preceding consonant more noticeably than the corresponding sound in the Germanic languages.

Since there is no conclusive phonetic evidence of the existence of phonemic (minimal pair) opposition between semivocalic and vocalic i, both could be considered as allophones of the vowel i.

1.4. Consonants 1.4.1. Articulation

		Voiced				Voiceless				
Ĭ	∡ab.	Dent.	Alv.	Pal.	Vel.	Lab.	Dent.	Alv.	Pal.	Vel.
Plosive										*******
non aspirated	b	d			g	p	t			k
aspirated					_	ph	th			kh
Fricative						-				
aspirated	ν					f				h
sibilant			z	ž		·		S	š	
affricate			(dz)	dž				ts	č	
aspirated affricate			, ,						čh	
Sonorant										
nasal	m	n								
liquid		1	r							

In addition, there is a phonemic retroflex r, pronounced as an r-colored l which is obsolescent in the dialect of Sofia, a fact observed and reported by educated Roms.

This presentation of the consonants is based on their phonological features in initial positions before the low vowel a. As is the case with Bulgarian, it is possible to use different perspectives and postulate the existence of other sets of phonemes. (For instance Bulgarian grammarians have traditionally considered the combination of a consonant and a front semi vowel, as in the proper name $P'e\underline{tio}$, as a separate phoneme, although it never occurs finally.)

The aspirated voiceless stops could be considered as combinations of p, t, k, k+k-k-k. This is a legitimate approach in a synchronic analysis as there is no evidence of phonemic opposition between ph, th, kh, k-k and p+h, t+h, k+h, k-k-k. Such a treatment however would pose some theoretical problems that are best avoided if ph, th, kh, k-k are regarded as separate phonemes.

The plosive consonants are articulated as in Bulgarian (as well as in French, Italian, Spanish and all Slavic languages).

The fricatives are articulated as in English with one notable exception: h may have various voiced or voiceless allophones which may sound like aspirated English h, guttural Spanish j, or velar/palatal Slavic (Bulgarian, Russian, Polish) h.

The palatal affricate $d\tilde{z}$ tends to be pronounced as $/\tilde{z}/$ although this pronunciation is not considered elegant in Sofia. However it seems to be the norm in Rakitovo.

The alveolar or dental-alveolar affricates ts and dz are pronounced as affricative /ts/ and /dz/. The second is rare.

Note that the graphic combination $\check{c}h$ as in $\check{c}hai$ 'a girl', $\check{c}huri$ 'a knife' usually stands for $|\check{c}s|$ (English ch + sh) in Sofia speech but for an aspirated $|\check{c}|$ in other dialects, including that of Rakitovo.

The sonorant m is pronounced as in English.

The sonorants n and l may have two major and noticeably different allophones each. Before front vowels they are palatal consonants similar to French and German (Hochdeutsch) n and l. In all other positions they are dental or dental-alveolar consonants pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the front teeth or their base. Thus, dental or dental-alveolar l sounds similar to English (General American) l in call.

1.4.2. Major Phonological Changes

1.4.2.1. Palatalization

All consonants may be palatalized to various degrees when they occur before front vowels. It is interesting to note that some palatalizations, mostly induced by vocalic or semivocalic *i*, result in new phonemes.

Historical t has become palatal k before semivocalic i as for instance in oblique case forms:

Nominative but'i 'work'
Oblique buti'a /buki'a/

Similarly, historical d has become a palatal g before semivocalic i:

kerd'e 'they made' kerdi'as /kergi'as/ 'he/she made'

In Sofia speech, t is normally preserved before vocalic i, thus the regular form is but'i; forms such as tsikn'o < tikn'o 'little' are obviously loans from other dialects.



This grammar uses normalized morphophonemic spellings such as *kerdias*, not *kergias*. The preservation of the letter that indicates the original consonant is also consistent with the phonology of dialects such as that of Rakitovo in which there is no palatalization.

1.4.2.2. Bulgarian-Type Palatalizations

Words of Bulgarian origin may display Bulgarian-type palatalizations: voin'ik(os) 'a soldier'; pl. voin'itses (Bulg. voinik, pl. voinitsi)

1.4.2.3. Devoicing

As in Bulgarian, all voiced consonants, except the sonorants, are devoiced before voiceless consonants and finally. Because of the morphophonemic spelling principle in this paper, this is not reflected in the orthography used in this text:

Nom. dad /dat/ 'a father'

Oblique dades

1.4.2.4. Elision of Consonants

Bulgarian Romani has similar types of elision as Bulgarian. The most noteworthy is the dropping of final dental plosives before a sibilant:

Nom. sing. vast /vas/ 'a hand'

Nom. plural vast a

Nom. sing. kašt /kaš/ 'a tree'

Nom. plural kašť a

There are types of elision that do not bear the marks of any visible Bulgarian influence such as loss of n between vowels as in the dialect of Rakitovo:

phen'ela>ph'ela 'he/she says'

In some cases, the loss of the root-final consonant has assumed a morphophonemic character. For example, root-final $-\nu$ is regularly dropped from roots of verbs before the past-tense suffix -n:

rovno>rono /run'o/ 'he cried'

Similarly root-final -v and -r are regularly dropped from roots of verbs before the past-tense suffix -l:

avl'o>al'o 'he came' perl'o>pel'o 'he fell'

Because of the morphophonemic character of the orthography in this paper, such forms are spelled *rovno*, *avlo*, *perlo*.

1.4.2.5. Loss of Aspiration

The aspirated consonant kh may lose the aspiration in all possible positions and merge with k. This results in numerous inconsistent orthographies in published texts:



adavkh'a and adavk'a 'this'
kh and k 'to'

arakhli'as and arakli'as 'he/she found (something)'

The last two pairs occur in a single half-page text by the same author.

The other aspirated consonants, ph, th, and $\check{c}h$, are much less likely to merge with the corresponding unaspirated ones, p, t and \check{c} .

1.5. Word Accentuation

The stress can fall on any syllable in a Romani word. Words of Indic origin tend to have the stress on the final syllable. This is a general, yet not absolute rule. Words of Bulgarian or Greek origin normally preserve the position of the stress in the original language (free and unpredictable in Bulgarian, unpredictable, yet restricted to one of the last three syllables in Greek).

1.6. Intonation and Stress Patterns in the Sentence

Affirmative sentences normally have a relatively flat intonation. The main stress can fall on any verb, noun, pronoun, adjective or adverb that needs to be given prominence.

Usually, conjunctions, articles, particles and postpositions are not stressed. The major exceptions to this rule are:

The negative particles ma or na when the negated word is not a verb:

M'a ruv, a manuš sikavel pes. 'Not a wolf, but a man appears'.

The particles po and nai used in comparative and superlative forms:

Hasan isi o <u>n'ai</u> baro phral. 'Hasan is the oldest brother'.

Prepositions are not stressed unless a locative prepositions must be emphasized:

O rikono ovlo angl'al o kaxt.

'The dog was in front of the tree (not behind)'.

Intonation in Wh- interrogative sentences is similar to that in affirmative sentences. Special intonation patterns are used to add information that would not be detected on a morphosyntactic level: a request for repetition, an expression of disbelief, etc.

The main stress in Wh- sentences falls on the question word if the sentence starts with it:

Kon sinian tu? 'Who are you?'

If another word must be emphasized it is more normal to assign it a more prominent place in the sentence than simply to put a strong stress on it:

A tu kon sinian? 'And who are you?'



Yes-or-no interrogative sentences have an intonation similar to that of Whquestions. There is always a strong stress on the verb in the interrogative form (followed by the interrogative particle *li* in many dialects):

Dikh'es li so si adavkha? 'Do you see what this is?'

If the question refers to a word other than the verb (followed by the interrogative particle li), that word bears the main stress.

<u>Šofi'ori</u> li si? 'Is he/she a driver?' <u>ŠK ola-te li džas?</u> Are you going to school?

2. Morphology

This chapter deals with the variable parts of speech and their grammatical forms characterized by synthetic markers. For analytical forms (such as analytically formed tenses) see chapter 3 on syntax.

2.1. Nouns

Nouns are either of the masculine or feminine gender. The distinction is not always visible. It appears in some endings such as the oblique case endings in the singular: -es for the masculine and -a for the feminine. Nominative singular endings may also be an indicator. Thus, the nominative singular endings -o as in chav'o 'a boy', or -os, as in k'okalos 'a bone', indicate that the word is masculine.

In addition, nouns can be in one of two numbers, singular or plural, and in one of two cases, nominative or oblique.

The number and case distinctions may be visible from the endings. For instance the ending -en indicates that the noun is in the oblique plural. In many other cases the number and case cannot be determined from the ending. For example the ending -a appears in feminines in the nominative and oblique singular and in masculines in the nominative and oblique plural. There are nouns that are normally only plural, such as lov'e 'money', or only singular, such as dar 'fear'.

Nouns can be declined in two different ways. In the oblique they can take endings that are different from or the same as those in the nominative. The choice of endings can depend on an opposition of extralinguistic features: animacy versus inanimacy. There are syntactic environments in which nouns that denote animate beings normally take special endings in the oblique, while nouns that refer to inanimate objects or abstract notions have the same endings in the oblique as in the nominative.

There also exist two other syntactic environments in which: a) All nouns, animate and inanimate alike, take oblique endings that are different from those in the nominative; b) All nouns, animate and inanimate alike, have the same endings in the oblique as in the nominative. For details see 3.2.2.



2.1.1. Declensions

2.1.1.1. First Group. This group includes masculines that are most probably of Indic origin.

	First subgroup	Second subgroup
	manuš 'a man'	čhavo 'a boy'
	Singular	
N	man´uš	čhav-'o
Ο	manuš-'es	čhav-'es
	Plural	
N	manuš-'a	čhav-'e
Ο	manuš-'en	čhav-'en

Nouns that have lost the final dental after a sibilant in the nominative singular restore it before the oblique endings: nom. sing. kašt /kaš/ 'a tree', oblique sing. kašt es, nom. plural kašt a, oblique plural kašt en.

The same applies to nouns ending in -on in the nominative singular that have lost the final -n: nom. sing. vyrdon/vyrd'on/ or /vyrd'o/, oblique sing. vyrdon'es, nom. plural vyrdon'a, oblique plural vyrdon'en.

2.1.1.2 Second Group. This group includes feminines that are most probably of Indic origin.

	First subgroup	Second subgroup	
	phuv 'earth', land' Singular	romni 'a (Gypsy) woman, a wife'	
N	phuv	romn-'i	
0	phuv-i'a	romn-i'a	
	Plural		
N	phuv-i'a	romni-'a	
0	phuv-'en	romni-'en	

A small number of feminines without ending in the nominative take -a rather than -ia in the oblique: Nominative sing. dar 'fear', oblique sing. dar'a. There does not seem to be a link between the final consonant and the ending: phuv 'earth' is phuvia in the oblique whereas džuv 'a louse' is džuva.

2.1.1.3. Third Group. This group includes masculines of Greek, Bulgarian, Turkish or other non-Indic origin. The Greek nominative endings -os, -es, -is are very productive and are added to nouns of non-Greek origin, even to Bulgarian personal names and names of places (V'ančos, Pl'ovdivos) and Bulgarian diminutives (kami'ončes 'a toy truck').



	First subgroup	Second subgroup
	kokalos 'a bone'	parčes 'a piece'
	Singu	ılar
N	K okal-os	parč-'es
0	K okal-os	parč-'es
	Plur	al
N	k'okal-a	parč-'edes
0	Kokal-en	parč-'eden

Nouns of Bulgarian origin may display Bulgarian morphophonemic peculiarities such as Bulgarian-type palatalization (k>ts): Nom. sing. voin'ikos a soldier, Nom. plural voin'itsia.

	Third subgroup	Fourth subgroup
	košničaris 'a basket-maker' Singular	bukvari 'a primer/reader'
N	košnič'ar-is	bukv'ari
0	košnič'ar-is	bukv'ar-es
	Plural	
N	košnič´ar-ia	bukv'aria
0	košnič´aren	bukv'ar-en

A certain number of nouns of seemingly Indic origin, such as vog'i 'a soul' fit in the fourth subgroup.

	Fifth subgroup	Sixth subgroup
	<i>komšias</i> 'a neighbor' Singular	laf 'a word'
N	komš'i-as	laf
O	komš'i-as	l'af-es
	Plural	-
N	komš'i-adia	l'af-ia
0	komš'i-aden	l'af-en

2.1.1.4. Fourth Group. This group includes mostly feminines of Bulgarian origin.

košnitsa 'a basket'

Singular

N k'ošnits-a

O k'ošnits-a

Plural

N Košnits-es

O Košnits-en

2.1.1.5. Fifth Group. This group includes masculines that originally were Bulgarian neuters ending in -o.

tsarstvo 'a kingdom'

Singular

N ts'arstv-o

O ts'arstv-ones

Plural

N ts'arstv-a

O ts'arstv-onen

2.1.1.6. Sixth Group. This group includes nouns that are or seem to be of Indic origin, formed with the suffixes -ip- or -ib-. Typically, they have an abstract meaning and no plural forms.

tatipe 'warmth'

Singular

N tatip-'e

O tatip-n'as

Note: Nouns such as pi-ib-a 'drinking, a drink' are declined in the same way.

2.1.2. Vocative Forms

The vocative forms could be considered as forms of a vocative case. There is an argument for putting them in a separate category; their use does not depend on the syntactic environment in the same way as does that of the nominative and the oblique cases.

Bulgarian Romani uses various vocative forms of different origin. There are some recurring patterns, but the vocatives forms sometimes cannot be predicted from the nominative forms.

Nouns of Bulgarian origin are often used with Bulgarian vocative endings: ts'ar(es) 'a king', Voc. ts'ariu!. Nouns of non-Bulgarian origin may also take Bulgarian endings: Nes'iba a woman's name, Voc. Nes'ibo!

The most commonly used endings with words that seem to be of Indic origin are -eia and -a for masculine nouns in the singular: manu's 'a man', Voc. manus-'eia!; phral 'brother', Voc. phral-'a!

A widely used feminine vocative ending is -e: romn-'i 'a (Gypsy) wife', Voc. romn-i'e!, čh'ai 'a girl', Voc. čh'ai-e!



The most typical vocative plural ending that is probably of Indic origin is -alen: phral-'alen! 'brothers!', čhav'alen! 'boys!', rom'alen! 'people!, Gypsies!'

2.2. Postpositions

Romani has several postpositions or agglutinative suffixes, used after nouns, pronouns, or substantivized words. The semantic function of the Romani postpositions is similar to that of the European prepositions or case endings. There is a close correlation between the use of the postpositions and some Bulgarian prepositions:

ke / ge 'to/for'; Bulg. na (dative use) or za koro / goro 'of', used to denote possession, origin, etc.; Bulg. na (possesive use)

te / de 'at, in, on'; Bulg. na (locative use) or v

tar / dar 'from'; Bulg. ot

The forms starting with a voiced consonant are used when the preceding word ends in a voiced consonant (but not in a vowel).

manuš´es-ke	to/for a man	romni'a-ke	to/for a wife
manuš'en-ge	to/for men	romn'en-ge	to/for wives
manuš'es-koro	a man's	romni'a-koro	a wife's
manuš'en-goro	men's	romn'en-goro	wives'
manuš'es-te	at/in a man	romni'a-te	at/in a wife
manuš´en-de	at/in men	romn'en-de	at/in wives
manuš´es-tar	from a man	romni'a-tar	from a wife
manuš'en-dar	from men	romn'en-dar	from wives

The possessive postposition *koro | goro* agrees in number, gender and case with the possessee and can therefore be considered as an agglutinative suffix or a family of suffixes. Note that there is no agreement between the postposition/suffix and the possessor. See also 3.3.1.3.

Masculine singular possessor Feminine singular possessor

Masculine singular possessee

N romes-koro grast 'a man's horse' romnia-koro phral 'a wife's brother'

O romes-kere grastes romnia-kere phrales

Feminine singular possessee

N romes-keri čhai 'a man's daughter' romnia-keri čhai 'a wife's daughter'

O romes-kere čhaia romnia-kere čhaia



Multiple possessees

- N romes-kere chave 'a man's children' romnia-kere chave 'a wife's children'
- O romes-kere čhaven romnia-kere čhave

Multiple possessors

Masculine singular possessee

Feminine singular possessee

- N romen-goro gav 'a Gypsy village' romen-geri čhai 'a daughter of Gypsies'
-) romen-gere gaves romen-gere čhaia

Multiple possessees

- N romen-gere grasta 'Gypsies' horses'
- O romen-gere grasten

2.3. Verbs

Verbs can display morphological markers of seven morphological categories: transitivity-intransitivity, number, person, gender, mood, aspect and tense.

The morphological markers are mostly suffixes and endings. There are some suppletive forms but no sure examples of Indo-European vowel gradation. (But see the concluding remarks in 1.1.2.2.)

2.3.1. Transitivity-Intransitivity

This is a purely morphological category. Transitive and intransitive verbs can be distinguished by their different morphological structures. A transitive verb in Romani is a verb that can (but does not necessarily) take a direct object. Even when used without an object, the morphological structure of some of its forms indicates that it is potentially transitive, and should be considered as such. An intransitive verb is a verb that cannot normally take a direct object.

The distinction between the two types of verbs is visible in two cases. In the third person singular of the past tense, intransitive verbs have different endings depending on the gender of the subject—masculine or feminine. Intransitive verbs have the same ending:

Intransitive:

avl'o 'he went'; avl'i 'she went'

Transitive:

kerdi'as 'he/she made (something)'

Some verbs are treated as either transitive or intransitive. The difference is visible from the opposition of past tense suffixes as well as from the endings in the third person singular of the past tense: *ir-in-d-i'as* 'he/she returned (something)'; *ir-is'a-il-o* 'he came back'; *ir-is'a-il-i* 'she came back'.



2.3.2. Number

There are two morphologically distinguishable numbers, singular and plural. The distinction appears in both synthetic tenses, present and past.

2.3.3. Person

The verb has three persons, first, second and third.

2.3.4. Gender

The intransitive verbs display different endings in the third person singular of the past tense depending on the gender of the sentence subject, masculine or feminine.

2.3.5 Mood

There are two synthetically formed moods, indicative and imperative. Since the synthetic imperative is used only in one tense, present-future, it is probably appropriate and certainly more convenient to speak of imperative forms, not of imperative mood. Consequently, when the term "tense" in this grammar refers to a morphological form it should be understood that the form is in the indicative.

2.3.6. Aspect

The Rakitovo dialect, among others, has two different verbal aspects distinguished on a morphological level by the presence or absence of -a after the present-tense ending: phen'ava, phen'esa, phen'ela, phen'asa, phen'ena, phen'ena as opposed to phen'av, phen'es, phen'el, phen'as, phen'en, phen'en 'I, you say, he/she says, we, you, they say'. The aspectual opposition seems obsolescent in the dialect of Sofia where normally only the short forms are used. The Rakitovo usage of aspect is discussed in 3.2.6.

2.3.7. Tense

Thre are two synthetically formed tenses, present and past.

2.3.8. Conjugations

```
2.3.8.1.1. First Group

phen- 'to say'

Singular Plural

1 phen-'av(a) 1 phen-'as(a)

2 phen-'es(a) 2 phen-'en(a)

3 phen-'el(a) 3 phen-'en(a)
```

2.3.8.1. Present Tense Conjugations



As noted in 2.3.6, the forms with and those without -a at the end are in aspectual opposition in some dialects, such as that of Rakitovo. In the Sofia dialect, the forms ending in -a are rarely used.

2.3.8.1.2. Second Group

dar- 'to be afraid'	
Singular	Plural
1 dar-'av(a)	1 <i>dar-'as</i> (a)
2 dar-'as(a)	2 dar-'an(a)
3 dar-'al(a)	3 dar-'an(a)

Most verbs are declined like *phen*- and only a small number of verbs, such as $d\check{z}$ - 'to go' $(d\check{z}av(a), d\check{z}as(a), d\check{z}as(a), d\check{z}as(a), d\check{z}an(a), d\check{z}an(a), are in the second group.$

2.3.8.1.3. Third Group. Verbs with the Suffix -(i)ov-

Verbs with the suffix -(i)ov- after the root morpheme are conjugated like those in the first group except that they may show inconsistencies in their present-tense paradigms. The suffix and the ending in the second and third persons, singular and plural, can merge.

bar-iov- 'to grow'	
Singular	Plural
1 bar-iov-'av	1 bar-iov-'as
2 bar-i'os	2 bar-i'on
3 bar-i'ol	3 bar-i'on

2.3.8.1.4. Irregular Verbs in the Present Tense

The only truly irregular verbs are the undeclinable ašt'i or aš'i 'can' and the equivalent of the verb "to be" which, in many dialects including that of Sofia, is conjugated like a past tense verb. See 2.3.8.2.2.

2.3.8.2. Past Tense Formation and Conjugations

The only synthetic past tense is formed with special suffixes and endings different from those in the singular. Transitive verbs do not display gender oppositions. Intransitive verbs have different 3 pers. sing. endings depending on the gender of the verb subject: -o for the masculine and -i for the feminine.

The choice of the suffix depends mostly on the morphophonemic structure of the verb root. However verb groups that take one suffix in one dialect may take another suffix in another dialect:



		Sofia	Rakitovo	
šun- phen-	'to hear' 'to say'	šun- <u>d</u> -ias /šungi'as/ phen- <u>d</u> -ias /phengi'as/	šun- <u>l</u> -ias /šunl´es/ phen- <u>l</u> -ias /phynl´es/	
uhti-	'to get up'	uht(i)- <u>in-il</u> -'o	uht(i)- <u>in</u> -′0	
nakn-	'to go'	nakh- <u>l</u> -'o	nakh- <u>il</u> -'o	

Some intercheangeability of forms is possible and various contaminations can also be observed:

čhiv- to throw čhiv-t-ias /čšiki'as/ and čhi-k-l-ias

Finally, one and the same verb may occasionally show inconsistent choice of the transitive or intransitive verb endings:

beš- 'to sit' beš-l-'o 'he sat' and beš-t-i'as 'he/she sat'

2.3.8.2.1. Types of Past-Tense Formation

Transitive verbs, invariable by gender

With one suffix:

Suffix -d-

```
phen- 'to say' phen-d-i'as 'he/she said'
ker- 'to do/make' ker-d-i'as 'he/she did/made'
našal- 'to find' našal-d-i'as 'he/she lost'
```

In the dialect of Sofia, this suffix is used with verbs whose roots end in the sonorants n, r, l or in -v, (especially in the suffix -av as in $\check{c}al$ -av- 'to hit'). As most verb roots end in one of those consonants, -d- is the most productive suffix in that dialect whereas other suffixes (except -l-) have more or less the status of exceptions. In Sofia, the suffix -d- is pronounced as a palatal /g/ before a semi-vocalic i as in phendias /phengi'as/.

```
Suffix -l-

mukh- 'to leave (something)' mukh-l-i'as 'he/she left (something)'

phuč- 'to ask' phuč-l-i'as 'he/she asked'
```

In the dialect of Sofia, this suffix is normally used with verbs whose roots end in k(h), $\check{c}(h)$. In the Rakitovo dialect, this suffix is particularly productive with verbs whose root ends in -n: phenlias /phynl'es/ 'he/she said, $\check{s}unlias$ / $\check{s}unl'es$ / 'he/she heard', etc.

```
Suffix -t-

čhiv- 'to throw' čhivtias, Sofia: /čsi(v)ki'as/ 'he/she threw'

naš 'to run' naštias 'he/she ran'

beš- 'to sit' beštias 'he sat'
```

This is a rare suffix in the dialect of Sofia. The last two anomalous forms (pronounced /našt'es/ and /bešt'es/) are from written records from Rakitovo. The verbs are actually intransitive but used with transitive endings. The regular

intransitive forms *našľo* and *bešľo* have also been recorded in Rakitovo and in Sofia.

```
Suffix -il-

l- 'to take' l-il-i'as 'he took'

Suffix -in-

d- 'to give' d-in-i'as 'he/she gave'

Suffix -ist-

ukl- 'to mount' ukl-ist-i'as 'he/she mounted'

With two suffixes:

Suffixes -in-d-

rod- 'to look for something' rod-in-d-i'as 'he looked (for something)'

deh- 'to love' deh-in-d-i'as 'he loved'
```

This group contains a small number of verbs stressed on the first syllable.

Intransitive verbs, variable by gender

```
With one suffix:
```

```
Suffix -l-
```

```
av-'to come'av-l-o /al'o/'he came'be\check{s}-'to sit'be\check{s}-l-o'he sat'nakh-'to go by'nakh-l-o'he went by'
```

This is the most commonly used suffix in the dialect of Sofia (with verbs other than those containing the present-tense suffixes -iov- or -in-). Past-tense forms with other suffixes have more or less the status of exceptions in the dialect of Sofia.

Suffix -il-. In the Sofia dialect this suffix occurs in verbs which have a present-tense suffix -iov-. The present-tense suffix is dropped in the past-tense forms: ahal- 'to understand'; ahal-iov-'el 'he understands'; ahal-il-'o 'he understood'.

The -i- in the present-tense suffix -iov- and in the past tense suffix -ilcould be regarded as a vocalized j which is part of the root and not of the
suffixes. Then the verb root would be (a-)hali- (with a semi-vocalic i), the
present-tense suffix -ov-, and the past-tense suffix -l-.

```
Suffix -n-
rov- 'to cry' rov-n-o /run'o/ 'he cried'
Suffix -t-
sov- to sleep sov-t-o /sut'o/ 'he slept'
Sufffix -in-
uhti- 'to get up' uht-in-'o 'he got up'
```

This is a form recorded in Rakitovo (The regular Sofia form is *uhtinilo*.) The root of the verb *uhti*- ends in semivocalic -i which disappears before vocalic i.



With two suffixes:

```
Suffixes -an-il-
                                                         'he flew'
                  'to fly'
                                   uri-'an-il-o
           uri-
                                    dar-'an-il-o
                  'to be afraid'
                                                         'he got scared'
           dar-
        Suffixes -in-il-
                                                         'he got up'
           uhti- 'to get up'
                                    uht-'in-il-o
                                                         'he believed'
          pakh- 'to believe'
                                    pakh-'in-il-o
        Suffixes -isa-il-. These two suffixes appear in verbs containing the
suffix -in- in the present tense. In the past tense -in- is replaced by -isa-il-.
                    'to return'
                                     ir-is'a-il-o
                                                     'he returned'
          ir-in-
```

khid-is'a-il-e 'they gathered' khid-in 'to gather' Suffixes -ist-ilikl-iov- 'to go out' ikl-ist-il-'o 'he went out'

2.3.8.2.2. Past-Tense Conjugations. The transcription of the endings reflects their pronunciation in the Sofia dialect.

Transitive verbs	Intransitive verbs
phen- 'to say'	av- 'to come'
Singular	
1 phen-d-i'om	av-l-i'om
2 phen-d-i'an	av-l-i'an
3 phen-d-i'as	masc: av-l-'o, fem: av-l-'i
Plural	
1 phen-d-i'am	av-l-i'am
2 phen-d-'en	av-l-'en
3 phen-d-'e	av-l-'e

Note that the v is mute throughout the paradigm of av- 'to come'.

The equivalent of the verb "to be", in the dialect of Sofia and elsewhere, is conjugated like a past tense verb (with the suffix -in-) although it conveys a presenttense meaning. The only exception is the third pers. singular.

Singular	Plural
1 s-in-i'om	1 s-in-i'am
2 s-in-i'an	2 s-in-'en
3 (i)s'i	3 s-in-'en

The third person singular form is often pronounced /si/. In the negative the same form is i: (na) n'a i, often spelled nanai / nai. This verb does not have a normal synthetic past tense. Instead, the past tense of another verb is usually used: ov- 'to be, to become' - ovlo /ul'o/ 'he was/became'. Also, in the third person singular and plural, the past tense form sin'e is sometimes used.

2.3.8.3. Imperative Conjugations

The imperative is used in the second person singular and plural. The endings in the plural are always the same as in the indicative. Based on the endings in the second person singular, several groups of verbs can be distinguished:

First group. No ending.

ker- 'to do/make' ker! 'make!'

Verbs with roots ending in a semivocalic -i, vocalize the semivowel:

uhti- 'to get up' 'uhti! 'get up!'

Most verbs of the first present-tense conjugation (2.3.8.1.1.) belong here.

Second group. Imperative forms ending in -e.

rod- 'to look for something 'r'ode! 'look!'

deh- 'to love' d'eh-e! 'love!'

pomnin- 'to remember' p'omnin-e! 'remember!'

All verbs with the present-tense suffix -in- such as pomn-in- are in the this group. Besides, this group includes a small number of verbs that take the suffixes -in-d- in the past tense, and are stressed on the root syllable, such as rod- and deh-.

Third group. Imperative forms ending in -a.

dar- 'to be afraid' (ma) dar-a! '(don't) be afraid!'

This group consists of the verbs of the second present-tense conjugation (2.3.8.1.2.).

2.4. Participles

The dialect of Sofia has one actively used participle, the past passive. It is formed only from transitive verbs. The participle suffix is usually (but not always) the same as the past-tense suffix.

Suffix -d-. This suffix is used with verbs that take -d- in the past tense.

ker- 'to do/make' ker-d-'o 'made'

Suffix -l-. This suffix is used with verbs that take -l- in the past tense.

mukh- 'to leave' mukh-l-'o 'left, abandoned'

Suffix -im-. These are verbs that have the suffix -in- in the present. The suffix -in- is dropped in the participle:

p'iš-in- 'to write' p'iš-im-e 'written'

This group also includes the small number of verbs that take the suffixes -ind- in the past tense, and are stressed on the root syllable:

deh- 'to love' d'eh-im-e 'loved'



Without a suffix. This group contains a small number of verbs that could be considered as exceptions:

phag-'to break' phag-'o 'broken'

Also: pek-'to roast' Rakitovo: pek-'o 'roasted' but Sofia: pek-l'-o

The participles formed with suffixes other than -im-, or without a suffix, are declined as qualitative adjectives. The participles formed with the suffix -im- are undeclinable.

2.5. Adjectives

The adjectives are variable by gender, number and case. The choice of oblique endings, different from or the same as in the nominative, depends entirely on syntactic factors.

2.5.1 Qualitative Adjectives

2.5.1.1. First Group

kal- 'black'

	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	kal-'o		kal-'i
0	kal-'e		kal-'e
		Plural	
N		kal-'e	
0		kal-'e	

2.5.1.2. Second Group

šukar 'good / nice-looking'

Masculine and feminine

Singular		Plural
N	šuk ar	šuk´ar
0	šukar'e	šukar'e

2.5.1.3. Third Group. This group includes adjectives of Bulgarian origin or borrowed through Bulgarian.

interesn- 'interesting'

Masculine and feminine

	Singular	Plural
N	inter esn-o	inter'esn-a
0	inter esn-one	inter esn-one

2.5.1.4. The Substantival Declension. If an adjective is substantivized, it is declined as a masculine or a feminine noun:

	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	kal-'o		kal-'i
0	kal-'es		kal-i'a
		Plural	
N		kal-'e	
0		kal-'en	

Substantivized adjectives of the third group add the substantival endings to the suffix -on-: masc. Nom. sing. interesn-o, oblique sing. interesn-on-es, etc.

2.5.1.5. Degrees of Comparison

The Sofia dialect has only remnants of the old synthetically formed comparative degree, such as *terneder* 'younger' (brother) from *terno* 'young', *phureder* 'older (brother)' from *phuro* 'old'.

2.5.2. Possessive Adjectives

First and second person singular and plural. Nominative forms. moro, mo 'my', toro, to 'your', amaro 'our', tumaro 'your'

		Singular	
Masc	culine	Feminine	Plural
Long 1 mor'o 2 tor'o	Short mo to	Long Short mer'i mi ter'i ti	Long Short mer'e me ter'e te
		Plural	
Masc	uline	Feminine	Plural
1 ama	ir'o	amar'i	amar'e
2 tum	ar'o	tumar'i	tumar'e

The possesive adjectives in the first and second person are declined like the qualitative adjectives.

Third person. In the third person, the possessive adjectives agree in gender and number both with the possessor and the possessee.

Masculine possessor

Masculine possessee		Feminine possessee	Multiple possessees
N	l'eskoro	l'eskeri	l'eskere
0	l'eskere	l'eskere	l'eskere



		Feminine possessor	
M	asculine possessee	Feminine possessee	Multiple possessees
N	l'akoro	l'akeri	l'akere
0	l'akere	l'akere	l'akere
		Multiple possessors	
M	asculine possessee	Feminine possessee	Multiple possessees
N	l'engoro	l'engeri	l'engere
0	l'engere	l'engere	l'engere

Third person reflexive, po 'his/her/their own'. The reflexive possessive adjective is declined as a qualitative adjective with endings added to the root p-.

2.5.3. Interrogative Adjectives

kova 'wh	o, which' lasculine	Feminine
	Sing	ular
N	kov'a	koi'a
0	kov'a	koi'a
	Plu	ral
N	kol	'a
0	kol	'a

avo	'what kind'		
	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	sav'o		sav'i
0	sav'e		sav'e
		Plural	
N		sav'e	
0		sav'e	

By adding the preffix *ni*- to the interrogative adjective (in a way borrowed from Bulgarian), negative adjectives are formed: masc. *nisav'o*, fem. *nisav'i*, plural *nisav'e* 'no (person, thing, etc.)' They are declined as *sav'o*.

2.5.4. The Indefinite Article

The indefinite article is placed before the noun or adjective it defines. It has developed from the cardinal number *ekh* 'one', but the reference to number has been lost. The indefinite article could be considered also as an indefinite adjective.

N	Masculine 1		Feminine
		Singular	
N	ekh		ekh
0	ekh'e		ekh'e
		Plural	
N		ekh	
0		ekh'e	

In the dialect of Sofia, all forms are pronounced with an initial semivocalic i. The final kh is deaspirated.

2.5.5. Demonstrative Adjectives

There is a rich variety of demonstrative adjectives—davkh'a, adavkh'a, kavkh'a, akavkh'a, akav'a, akav'a, adav'a okov'a, odov'a, etc.—to name a few in the nominative masculine singular. Most of these are actively used in the Sofia dialect.

Due to the structural similarity among the different demonstrative adjectives, the interchangeability among some of them, and the contamination of forms, it is somewhat difficult to isolate paradigms.

The following is an attempt at presenting some of the most common forms. It must be noted that this presentation is prescriptive to some extent. In actual speech, various crosses, analogous forms and contaminations are often heard.

The Rakitovo dialect tends to use nominative forms instead of the oblique even in environments where such substitution would not be expected: kaikha /keik'a/ puria-tar 'from this bridge' instead of kalkhe puria-tar; kavkha grastes-sa 'with this horse' instead of kalkhe grastes-sa, etc.

adavkha,	davkha 'this'		.
	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	(a)davkh'a		(a)daikh'a
0	(a)dalkh'e		(a)dalkh'a
		Plural	
N		(a)dalkh'a	
Ο		(a)dalkh'a	
akavkha,	kavkha 'this'		
	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	(a)kavkh'a		(a)kaikh'a
0	(a)kalkh'e		(a)kalkh'a
	, ,	Plural	, ,
N		(a)kalkh'a	
0		(a)kalkh'a	



akava, k	ava 'that'		
	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	(a)kav'a	_	(a)kai'a
Ο	(a)kal'e		(a)kaľ e
		Plural	
N		(a)kaľa	
0		(a)kaľ a	

The demonstrative adjectives okov'a 'that', adav'a 'this/that', and odov'a 'this/that' are declined in the same way as akav'a.

2.5.6. The Definite Article

The definite article is placed before the noun or adjective it defines. Morphologically, it is an adjective and is declined as a qualitative adjective. The forms in the dialect of Sofia are:

Masculine			Feminine
		Singular	
N	0	_	i
0	e		e
		Plural	
N		o/e	
0		e	

The Rakitovo dialect has generalized o in all cases, numbers and genders.

2.5.7. Numerals

From the point of view of their paradigms, the numerals can be considered either as genderless adjectives (when used attributively) or as pronouns (in absolute use). For the sake of brevity and clarity both types are presented together in this paragraph.

2.5.7.1 Cardinal Numbers

1 ekh	11 dešu´ekh	30 tri'anda
2 d'ui	12 dešuď ui	40 sar'anda
3 trin	13 dešutr'in	50 pe'inda
4 štar	14 dešušť ar	60 š'ovardeš
5 panč	15 dešup´anč	70 eft'avardeš
6 šov	16 dešuš'ov	80 ohť ovardeš
7 eft'a	17 dešefť a	90 ein'avardeš
8 oht o	18 dešohť o	100 <i>šel</i>
9 ein'a	19 dešein'a	
10 <i>deš</i>	20 <i>biš</i>	

In attributive use the cardinals can take -e in the oblique: ekhe thanes-te 'in one place', duie vasten-sa 'with both hands', štare kotoren-de 'in four pieces'.

In absolute use, the cardinals can have substantival forms (singular for ekh and plural for the other numbers) in the oblique case: doldiom ekhes 'I caught one (fish)'; čhindiom i phabai štaren-de 'I cut the apple in four'.

2.5.7.2. Ordinal Numbers

The ordinal numbers are formed by adding -to to the respective cardinal number: d'uito, tr'ito, etc.

The ordinal number 'first' is *ekutn'o* or *p'yrvo*. See 2.5.1.3 for the adjectival declension of the ordinal numbers and 2.5.1.4 (substantivized adjectives of the third group) for the substantival declension.

2.6. Pronouns

2.6.1. Personal Pronouns

First person singular

N me

O man

Second person singular

N tu

O tut

The final t in tut is mute before a postposition: tut-ke /t'uke/.

First person plural

N am'e

O am'en

By analogy, the oblique form can be used in the nominative.

Second person plural

N tum'e

O tum'en

By analogy, the oblique form can be used in the nominative.

Third person singular

Masculine		Feminine
N	ov	oi
0	les	la
Third pe	erson plural	

N ol

O len

The reflexive personal pronoun pes 'oneself' is undeclinable.



2.6.2. Possessive Pronouns

First and second person singular and plural

moro 'my', toro 'your', amaro 'our', tumaro 'your'

α.	1	
\ in	011	ЯТ
ОШ	zu	ш

		B	
Masculine		Feminine	Plural
1 N	mor'o	mer'i	mer'e
0	mer es	mere	mer en
2 N	tor'o	ter i	ter e
0	ter es	ter e	ter en
		Plural	
1 N	amar'o	amar'i	amar e
0	amar'es	amar'e	amar en
2 N	tumar'o	tumar'i	tumar'e
0	tumar'es	tumar'e	tumar'en

Third person. In the third person, the possessive pronouns agree in gender and number with both the possessor and the possessee.

Masculine possessor

		Mascardic possessor	
M	asculine possessee	Feminine possessee	Multiple possessees
N	l'eskoro	l'eskeri	l'eskere
0	l'eskeres	leskere	l'eskeren
		Feminine possessor	
M	asculine possessee	Feminine possessee	Multiple possessees
N	l'akoro	l'akeri	l'akere
0	l'akeres	l'akere	l'akeren
		Multiple possessors	
M	asculine possessee	Feminine possessee	Multiple possessees
N	l'engoro	l'engeri	l'engere
Ο	l'engeres	l'engere	l'engeren
Thi	rd person reflexive		
	-	. feminine or multiple po	222222
	iviasciiine	: temmie of minima	DSSCSSOLS

Masculine, feminine or multiple possessors

	Masculine possessee	Feminine possessee	Multiple possessees
N	per'o	per'i	per'e
0	per'es	per'e	per'en

2.6.3. Interrogative Pronouns

kon 'who' so 'what'

N kon N so
O kas O sos

Kon is pronounced /kon/ or /ko/.

Since the interrogative pronouns kon and so refer to subjects or objects whose gender and number are not known, they do not differ in gender or number.

In interrogative sentences with the construction meaning "is there (somebody or something)?," the pronouns kon and so can, as in Bulgarian, be used as relative pronouns meaning "anybody" and "anything." Since they are always subjects in this case, they are always in the nominative:

Isi li kon te phenel man-ge? 'Is there anybody to tell me?'

In negative sentences with the construction meaning "there is no (-body or -thing)," the pronouns kon and so can be used as negative pronouns meaning "nobody" and "nothing:"

Na na i kon te phenel man-ge 'There is nobody to tell me'.

The interrogative pronouns kov'a 'who / which one' and sav'o "what kind of person / thing" are declined like the corresponding interrogative adjectives (2.5.3.).

By adding the prefix *ni*- to the interrogative pronouns (in a way borrowed from Bulgarian), negative pronouns can be formed: *nikon* 'nobody', *nikova* 'nobody, none', *nisavo* 'no manner of man or thing', etc. These are declined like the pronouns from which they derive.

2.6.4. Demonstrative Pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns can be considered as substantivized demonstrative adjectives.

adavkh'a, davkh'a 'this one'

	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	(a)davkh'a	-	(a)daikh'a
Ο	(a)dalkh'es		(a)dalkh'a
		Plural	
N		(a)dalkh'a	
0		(a)dalkh'en	
akavkh'a	, kavkh'a 'this one'		
	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	(a)kavkh'a	_	(a)kaikh'a
Ο	(a)kalkh'es		(a)kalkh'a
		Plural	
N		(a)kalkh'a	
Ο		(a)kalkh'en	



akav'a, i	kav'a 'that one'		
	Masculine		Feminine
		Singular	
N	(a)kav´a	_	(a)kaľ a
0	(a)kal'es		(a)kaľ a
		Plural	
N		(a)kaľ a	
0		(a)kal'en	

The demonstrative pronouns okova 'that one', adav'a 'this/that one' and odov'a 'this/that one' are declined in the same way as akav'a.

2.6.5. Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns can be formed as in Bulgarian: with the suffix -to placed after the interrogative pronoun: kov'ato, (fem. koi'ato, plural kol'ato) 'who/whom/which/that'. Their oblique forms are the same as the nominative. Alternatively, the interrogative pronouns can be used without any modification as relative pronouns.

Both usages are more or less characteristic of the written language. In colloquial speech, as in Bulgarian, undeclinable words whose original meaning is "where" (with relative meaning) are used: d'eto (from Bulgarian deto), k'ate or kai.

3. Syntax

This chapter deals with analytical forms and their use as well as with relations between the parts of the sentence.

3.1. Analytical Forms and Their Use

3.1.1. Negation

Negation is formed by placing a negative particle, *na* or *ma*, in front of the word that is to be negated.

In the dialect of Sofia, na is used with verbs, unless they are in the imperative. Ma is used with verbs in the imperative and in all remaining cases such as negation of subjects, etc.:

Na džanav 'I don't know'.

Ma dara! 'Don't be afraid!'

Ma rični, a manuš sikavel pes 'Not a bear but a man appears'.

In many dialects throughout Bulgaria, including that of Sofia, the equivalent of the verb "to be" takes double negation in the third person singular of the present tense:

Davkha na na i moro 'This thing is not mine'.

Na na i man love 'I don't have money'.



The negative form of the verb "to be" is often spelled in one word: nanai.

Verbs with future-tense reference are negated as in Bulgarian: by placing the construction (na) na i (literally meaning 'there is not'), followed by the particle/conjunction te, in front of the verb conjugated in the present:

Na na i te avel 'He will not come'.

The same construction is used as a negative equivalent of conditional kaconstructions followed by as:

Te džanel-as, na na i te avel-as

'If he knew, he would not come' or 'If he had known, he would not have come'.

Negative conditionals negated simply by na (instead of na na i) also occur: O žyltitsen-sa kate dinias tut o čoras, ka ačhos-as barvalo i te čhave na oven-as beki bokhale.

'You could have become rich with the golden coins that the thief gave you and your children would not have been hungry any more'.

(Note: The nominative form *čoras* 'a thief' is regularly used in this Rakitovo text).

3.1.2. Interrogation: Yes-or-No Questions

The dialect of Sofia has borrowed the Bulgarian interrogative particle li. It can be placed after any part of speech to make a yes-or-no question and to suggest special interest in the information conveyed by that part of speech.

Mitko avel li? 'Is Mitko coming?'

Mitko li avel? 'Is it Mitko who is coming?'

The dialect of Rakitovo uses primarily prosodic features to form a yes-or-no question.

3.1.3. Analytical Verb Forms and Their Use

3.1.3.1. Forms with ka

Placed before a verb, the particle ka (from the verb kam- 'to love/want') can give it various meanings.

Future tense:

Kana ka aves? 'When are you going to come?'

This construction is used only in declarative and interrogative clauses, not in negative ones. The equivalent of future negative is formed with (na) na i. See 3.1.1.

The equivalent of the verb "to be", with future-tense meaning, is ov-:

Man-dar po bahtalo rom na ovela

'There will be no happier man than me'.

Future tense with the modal nuance of an imperative:

Tu ka bešes kheres! 'You will stay at home!'



A modal meaning expressing possibility:

With a present tense verb—present-time reference.

Kon li ka kerel daikha buti? 'Who might be doing this'?

With a present tense verb followed by as—past time reference.

Kon li ka kerel-as daikha buti?

'Who might have done / have been doing this'?

Future in the past or conditional meaning: ka + verb in the present tense + as.

O phuro ka merel-as i bes te mudaren les

'The old man was going to die even if they had not killed him'.

Te čalavel-as man dalkhe bares-sa, ka mudarel-as man

'If he had hit me with that rock, he would have killed me'.

3.1.3.2. Forms with te

The particle (or conjunction) *te* is used in constructions with various meanings, mostly modal. These constructions may correspond to various synthetically formed moods or non-finite verb forms in other Indoeuropean languages.

The *te*-constructions represent subordinate clauses. Even if the main clause is missing, it can be inferred from the context.

The use of the *te*-constructions is usually (but not always) based on and corresponds to that of the *da*-constructions in Bulgarian:

An equivalent of a subjunctive, infinitive or imperative, expressing a wish of various intensity:

Mangav te phenes man-ge kova si adavkha manuš

'I want you to tell me who this man is'.

Mangav te phenav tut-ke dui lafia 'I want to tell you a couple of things'. (See 3.3.1.2). A te-construction can be used without a main clause and will then

correspond to an imperative:

Akana te phenes man-ge kova si adavkha manuš '(I want you to) tell me now who that man is'.

An equivalent of a subjunctive, infinitive or imperative, expressing aim:

Ela, te phenav tut-ke so ka keres 'Come so that I tell you what to do'.

An equivalent of a conditional:

With a verb in the present, generally expressing a possible condition in the present or future.

Te manges te oves barvalo, ker buti! 'If you want to become rich, work!' (Bulgarian normally uses da constructions with this meaning only to denote an impossible condition. The verb followed by da is in the past unfinished tense.)

With a verb followed by -as, generally referring to an impossible condition in the past, present or future:



Te džanav-as, ka phenav-as tut-ke

'If I knew, I would tell you' or 'If I had known, I would have told you'.

An equivalent of a gerund:

Phen man-ge bes te hohaves 'Tell me without lying'.

Without a main clause—an expression of astonishment:

Te lel i te nasalel o pares!

'(How could she possibly) manage to lose the money!'

Descriptive meaning, as in relative or interrogative descriptive clauses:

O roma na ovlo len sos-sa te nakheren o praznikos

'The Gypsies had nothing with which to celebrate the holiday'.

Isi li manuš kovato te džanel? 'Is there a man who would know?'

Phučlias les sar te džan nai sig dži k o baro gav

'He asked him how they could get to the big village as fast as possible'.

Talal les-tar zaalo zomka nafela roiba či manuš te ikalel pi godi

'So terrible was the yelling that was heard underneath him that one could have lost one's mind'.

3.1.3.3. Forms with as

Placed after a verb conjugated in the present, the particle as changes the grammatical meaning of that verb. Verb forms with as are used:

To refer to actions or conditions which extended over some period in the past or had a habitual/repetitive character:

Ame bešen-as and e šukare gaves-te

'We lived/were living in a beautiful village'.

Kana Vančo sine tsikno, leskeri dai phukavel-as les-ke paramisia

'When Vancho was a young boy, his mother told him tales'.

In subordinate clauses of conditional sentences introduced by *te*, where it denotes a hypothetical action or condition in the past, present of future:

Te džanav-as, ka phenav-as tut-ke

'If I knew, I would tell you' or 'If I had known, I would have told you'.

With ka + verb in the present tense, to express future in the past or conditional meaning. See 3.1.3.1.

3.1.4. Degrees of Comparison

Romani has a neutral, a comparative and a superlative degree of comparison, formed analytically with various particles placed before the word to which they refer. In the dialect of Sofia and elsewhere in Western Bulgaria (including Rakitovo), the particles are the same as in Bulgarian: po (comparative) and nai (superlative), always pronounced with a stress:

baro 'big'

p'o baro 'bigger'

n'ai baro 'biggest'



As in Bulgarian, the degrees of comparison formed with *po* and *nai* are normally used with adjectives and adverbs but occasionally also with verbs and nouns.

3.1.5. Formation of Intransitive Verbs with the Intransitive/Impersonal Pronoun pes and Personal Pronouns in the Oblique

One of the two major functions of the intransitive (traditionally called "reflexive") or impersonal pronoun pes is the formation of intransitive verbs. (The other major function of pes is mentioned in 3.1.6.) This pronoun exists only in the third person and has the same form in the singular and the plural (The expected plural form pen is not common in the Western dialects). In the other persons, personal pronouns in the oblique are used with the same function. This use has been borrowed from Bulgarian. The typical Romani way to distinguish between transitive and intransitive verbs is by means of morphological markers.

O ruv garavdias pes and o veš 'The wolf hid in the forest'.

(The traditional Romani form would be O ruv garavdilo and o veš.)

Tu te kačines tut k i purt 'You get up on the bridge!'

If the forms garavdias or kačines were used without pes, the result would be ungrammatical sentences, with confusing transitive verbs without objects, meaning: 'The wolf concealed in the forest (concealed what?)' and 'You take up to the bridge (take what?)'.

Followed by -ke the pronoun pes has a different meaning: "for/to himself": O rom kindias pes-ke marno 'The man bought himself bread'.

Based on Bulgarian usage, associating a verb with *pes-ke* can create an emotional context or result in a new meaning of the verb:

Vyrdona thai kamionia nakhen pes-ke k i nevi prut bi dara-koro

'Carts and trucks go over the new bridge without fear'.

(The use of *pes-ke* emphasizes the fact that the action is performed without fear.)

Davkha si pes-ke ti buti 'That is your business (and I don't care).

Ov uštino i gelo pes-ke

'He got up and went home/where he had come from'.

3.1.6 Formation of Impersonal Verbs (Impersonal Clauses) with pes

The pronoun *pes* is also used to form impersonal verbs, transitive and intransitive:

Hanyma lafi na dinias te phenel pes irimas-ke

'Hanumma did not want to hear a word (lit: "for one to say a word/a word to be said") about going back'.

3.2. Use of Synthetic Forms

3.2.1. Use of Cases



3.2.1.1. Nominative. The nominative case is used with the subject of the clause or with its predicate:

Mitko isi šofiori 'Mitko is a driver'.

3.2.1.2. Oblique. If a declinable word is not subject or predicate, it is in the oblique case. Note the following functions of the oblique case used without a postposition:

Possessive: Man isi nevi taliga 'I have a new horse cart'.

Dative: De man te hav 'Give me (something) to eat'.

Locative: Ov bešel kheres 'He is staying at home'; O phrala živen-as ekhe tsikore gaves 'The brothers lived in a little village'.

3.2.2. Use of the Oblique Endings

With regard to the choice of oblique or nominative endings in the oblique, three types of syntactic environment can be distinguished.

a) The syntactic environment makes the use of the oblique endings mandatory. The only such environment is the combination of declinable word + postposition:

Ov ačhilo barvalo pe butia-sa 'He got rich through his work'.

Oblique endings are also usually required in the possessive construction consisting of the equivalent of the verb "to be" plus a word in the oblique case denoting the possessor:

E barvales isi love 'The rich man has money'.

Meres ovlo pori 'Mine had a tail'

(referring to a horse whose tail had been cut off).

Substituting the nominative for the oblique endings in this case would be equal to a change of case and would result in a different, nonsensical meaning:

Moro ovlo pori 'Mine was a tail'.

However, the nominative form can be used if followed by a pronoun in the oblique which refers to the possessor:

O roma, na ovlo len pares 'The Gypsies did not have money'.

b) The syntactic environment does not permit the use of the oblique endings. After some prepositions, such as k 'in/to', kat'ar 'from', mašk'ar 'among' etc., all declinable words, except the personal pronouns, take nominative endings:

Katar o mato li o delino našela

'Even a madman will run away from a drunken one'.

c) The syntactic environment allows a choice. Either an oblique or a nominative ending can be used.

When a declinable word is not used with a preposition or a postposition, the choice depends largely on morphological or extralinguistic factors. Nouns, denoting animate beings, normally take oblique endings whereas nouns that denote inanimate objects or abstract notions take nominative endings. This rule also applies to pronouns (providing they have oblique endings different from those in the



nominative). In the oblique they take oblique endings when used in reference to animate beings and nominative endings when they refer to inanimate objects or abstract notions. The personal pronouns form an exception; their oblique forms are used even if they substitute nouns denoting inanimate objects or abstract words. Words in attributive use (adjectives, articles, and participles) normally take the same type of ending as the noun to which they refer.

3.2.3. Substantivization

Substantivization occurs when an adjective or a participle is in absolute use (used without a noun). Then it is declined as a noun. An interesting exception may occur if the noun in the oblique has two attributes connected by a conjunction meaning "and." In this case, both attributes can be substantivized:

Kai dikhlias o čhavo salkha ranengores hem dripavones phures...

'When the boy saw the wounded and tattered (lit: "such a wounded and tattered") old man...'

Sa pomožinava o čoren hem o naboromen halken

'I always help the poor and the sick (people)'.

3.2.4. Use of the Vocative Forms

The vocative forms are used in address:

Chaie, džanes li so si adavkha? 'Girl, do you know what this is?'

3.2.5. Use of the Synthetic Tenses

3.2.5.1. Present. The present tense is used to denote:

Actions or conditions that have a present-time reference: habitual or momentary.

So keres? 'What are you doing (now)?' or 'How are you (in general)?' Me džav škola-te 'I am going to school' or 'I go to school'.

Actions or conditions that stretch from the past into the present.

Me siniom ake dui sahatia 'I have been here for two hours'.

Future in subordinate clauses introduced by a temporal adverb.

Ta te dikhen man li on kai phuriovava

'So that they take care of me likewise when I grow old'.

A stylistic device used to create vividness in story telling.

O ruv avel thai phenel: 'Akana ka hav tut'

'The wolf comes and says: "Now I am going to eat you up".

3.2.5.2. Past. The synthetic past tense is used:

Like the Bulgarian finished past tense (aorist). This tense refers to an action or a condition that was completed in the past:



Mo phral našaldias love 'My brother lost some money'.

This tense does not normally refer to habitual actions or conditions in the past.

With perfective meaning. There are no special tenses for description of results of earlier actions or conditions. For instance, instead of a pluperfect, the simple past tense is used:

O sydia nadindias či o rom andias les-ke pares

'The judge hoped that the Gypsy had brought him money'.

With conditional meaning—in subordinate clauses.

Šundias o sydia, tume sinen bange

'If the judge finds out (should find out), you will take the blame'.

3.2.6. Aspectual Opposition

Many Romani dialects have two different present-tense conjugations, with or without -a at the end. The two forms are usually in aspectual opposition. The following description of aspect is based on the usage in the Rakitovo dialect. The dialect of Sofia uses forms ending in -a much less often and the opposition between the two forms has become obscure. In the Rakitovo dialect, the forms with and without -a at the end are in complementary distribution: cases where either form can be used, with or without a semantic opposition between the two forms, are rare.

3.2.6.1 Forms Without a at the End. These forms are used:

In ka-constructions.

Ka džas paš me phenen-de 'You will go to my sisters' place'.

In te-constructions that do not have a conditional meaning.

Phen man-ge so te kerav 'Tell me what to do'.

In main clauses, to denote consecutive actions.

Huliaven les ot akanes, thoven les-ke ekh šuvar k o šoro, pala zauklen les ekh palal averes dži kai pharilo leskoro vogi

'They take him down from there, put a bridle on his head, then start riding him one after the other, until his heart burst.'

In main clauses, with present tense meaning.

Na dikhlen li či upral k o vyrba isi manuš?

'Can't you see that there is a man in the willow?'

This usage is relatively rare in the Rakitovo dialect where the aspectual opposition is well maintained and the form with-a is preferred.

3.2.6.2. Forms Ending in -a. These forms are used:

In main clauses, to denote a present tense action or condition with indicative meaning

So keresa?'What are you doing?'



In te-constructions with conditional meaning.

Te bičalesa khere trin gone iaro, me chaven k ovel tsalo vend marno 'If you send three bags of flour to my place, my children will have bread the whole winter'.

In temporal subordinate clauses with future reference.

Avlo leskere godia-te kai ikliola, te na džal butia-te a te kačinel pes k o tavani i ot akanes te dikhel kon kerela leske hizmeti

'It occurred to him, when he goes out, not to go to work, but to go up to the attic and to see from there who is helping him'.

3.2.7. Use of the Definite Article

The definite article is used with subjects or objects (nouns or other substantivized parts of speech) that have already been mentioned or that the interlocutors are familiar with. The following major peculiarities from the point of view of English should be noted. The definite article is typically used:

With abstract nouns functioning as subjects:

O bahtalipe na na i šošoi te astares les

'Happiness cannot be caught like a rabbit'.

With nouns followed by possessive adjectives in their long forms:

So phendias i dai lengeri?

'What did his mother say?'

Before ekh used attributively, a construction which, as in Bulgarian, has the meaning of an ordinal number:

Arakhle o ekh žyltitsa 'They found the first golden coin'.

The following uses are quite common yet not mandatory. The choice between a construction with the definite article and a construction without an article is governed by stylistic factors.

With names of persons

O Vančos hal but 'Vanchos eats a lot'.

With names of places

O Plovdivos isi bari diz 'Plovdiv is a big city'.

In the dialect of Sofia and elsewhere, the preposition and 'in' is normally followed by a definite article even when the reference is to a notion introduced for the first time:

Dalkhe roma bešen-as and e šukare gaves-te

'These Gypsies lived in a nice village'.

This use is common even with words that otherwise cannot be used with an article, such as pronouns, interrogative adjectives etc.:

Man isi nevi čanta. And e la-te thoyay me tetratkes

'I have a new bag. I put my notebooks in it'.



And e save klasos-te sinian tu?

'In which grade are you?'

(In other dialects however, the usage is: An(d) save klasos-te san tu?)

3.2.8. Use of the Indefinite Article

The indefinite article ekh gives the noun to which it refers a neutral informational status and is used to avoid unnecessary emphasis. Compare:

Ekh manuš iklistili katar o veš 'A man came out of the forest'.

Manuš iklistili, na rični 'A man came out, not a bear'.

Compare also:

Davkha si manuš 'This is a man'.

(It is important to note that the person is a human being and not an animal or an inanimate thing.)

Davkha si ekh manuš katar amaro gav 'This is a man from our village' (It is more important to note that the man is from our village than to observe

that he is not an animal or a thing.)

However, there are no absolute laws that govern the use of the indefinite article. It may or may not be used in one and the same environment for various stylistic purposes. The following is an example of a construction without the indefinite article where one would expect it:

Taman pogolo naandre i evkares upral les čhitias pes manuš

'He had just walked inside (in the forest) when suddenly a man threw himself upon him'.

3.3. Relations Between the Parts of Speech

3.3.1. Agreement

3.3.1.1. Sequence of Tenses

As in Bulgarian, verbs in a subordinate clause are normally in the present, regardless of the tense in the main clause:

Phendias kai isi bokhalo 'He said he was hungry'.

3.3.1.2. Agreement of the Verb in Person

As a typical Balkan language, Romani has no infinitive forms. If the subject of the subordinate clause is the same as that of the main clause, both verbs are conjugated and agree in person and number with the subject. The verb in the subordinate clause however is always in the present.

So manges te has? 'What do you want to eat?'

Mangav-as te phenav tut-ke vareso 'I wanted to tell you something'.



3.3.1.3. Agreement of the Article in Possessive Constructions with Postpositions

These constructions deserve some special attention. They consist of a definite article, a word denoting the possessor, a possessive postposition and a word denoting the possessee.

e	čores	koro	grast	'the thief's horse'
Article	Possessor	Postposition	Possessee	
e Article	<i>čores</i> Possessor	<i>keri</i> Postposition	stadik Possessee	'the thief's hat'
e Article	čores Possessor	kere Postposition	love Possessee	'the thief's money'

The article is in agreement with the possessor, not with the possessee. This is an argument against considering phrases in which the second element is a possessive postposition as adjectives:

Compare:

E cores keri stadik thabliol 'The thief's hat is burning'.

I stadik thabliol 'The hat is burning'.

In the first sentence, the definite article does not agree in case with the subject stadik but with its attribute čores. In the second sentence, in which the subject stadik does not have an attribute, the article agrees in case with the subject.

3.3.2. Word Order

The word order is similar to that of Bulgarian, considerably freer than the word order of English, French or German.

The most important factor that determines the word order is not the syntactic nature of the clause, whether declarative, interrogative or negative, main or subordinate. In any of these, although some patterns are more typical than others, the subject, verb and object can be arranged in any possible way and adverbials can generally be placed anywhere in the clause.

The word order depends primarily on the importance of the information carried by the various parts of speech, the more important being generally assigned a more prominent position: posterior or anterior.

Note however that stress patterns are an even more important cue than word order as to the relative importance of the speech parts in terms of information. If a word carries a strong stress, it becomes prominent regardless of its position.

Thus, if pronounced with flat intonation and no particular stress on any word, the sentence *Mitko halias marno* would normally mean 'Mitko ate bread', the message being "What Mitko had as a meal was bread." Pronouncing *Mitko* or *halias* with a strong stress would change the meaning into "It was Mitko who ate bread" and "Yes, Mitko did eat his bread."



In negative, and interrogative clauses of the yes-or-no type, the word order usually (but not always) has little significance in terms of importance of information, since the most important word is signaled by the presence of the negative or interrogative particle.

3.3.2.1. Most Typical Word Order Patterns

3.3.2.1.1. Declarative Clauses

(S) V O. The listener's attention is typically drawn to the object unless indicated otherwise by stress:

Mitko hal marno 'Mitko is eating bread'.

O V. The listener's attention is typically drawn to the object unless indicated otherwise by stress:

Marno hal 'He's eating bread'.

V S. The listener's attention is typically drawn to the subject unless indicated otherwise by stress:

Avlo ekh ruv 'A wolf came by'.

3.3.2.1.2. Negative Clauses

The same patterns are used as in the declarative sentences but the negation usually gives some prominence to the verb. Other words can be set off through stress.

In sentences of the "not...but" type where the negation refers to subjects, objects, or adverbials, with a verb in the affirmative, the attention is naturally drawn to the words preceded by "not" and "but":

Ma grast a her sikavdias pes 'Not a horse but a donkey showed up'.

3.3.2.1.3. Interrogative Clauses

The word order is quite free and various patterns, such as (S) V O; V S (O); O V (S), are possible. In yes-or-no questions, the listener's attention is typically directed to the word in the interrogative form (followed by li) but it may also be directed to another word in a prominent position In Wh-questions - the listener's attention is drawn to the question word and, in addition, it may be directed to another word, indicated by stress or context.

3.3.2.2. Fixed Word-Order Patterns

In spite of the generally free word order, there are syntactic structures in which the word order is fixed. For instance attributively-used adjectives precede the nouns to which they refer: bahtalo manuš 'a happy man'. Exceptions are found in artistic style such as poetry: čhaie meri 'daughter mine'. Another example is



relative-interrogative predicative clauses introduced by an interrogative pronoun, in which the word order is S (relative interrogative pronoun) V P: *Phen man-ge so si daykha* 'Tell me what this is'.

3.3.3. Omission of Main Parts of Speech

3.3.3.1. Omission of the Subject

Since the verb endings are different in five of the six persons, once a subject in the third person has been designated, it can be omitted without creating confusion.

Okova dives dikhliom Mitko. Phendias kai ka avel avdives

'I saw Mitko the other day. He said he would come today'.

If the subject is in the first or second person, it is normally omitted since no confusion is possible.

Na mangav te džav les-sa 'I don't want to go with him'.

Impersonal sentences are also used without a subject. The following main types of impersonal sentences, according to the subject implied, are common:

With an unmentioned subject meaning 'they/people':

Ekhes kharen-as Iaško, a akales Badati

'One was called Yashko, the other one Badati'.

(Literally: '[People] called one Yashko....')

With an unmentioned subject meaning "it" and referring to atmospheric conditions:

Kana zaratilo, o rom gelo kheres 'When it got dark, the man went home'.

With an unmentioned subject meaning "it" without a definite reference, used, as in Bulgarian, with some verbs denoting general conditions, with or without a modal meaning, such as:

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is'i 'there is'
m'ože, m'ožinel 'it is possible'
tr'ebe, tr'eba, tr'ebuvinel, etc. 'it is necessary'
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3.3.4. Omission of the Main Clause

As in Bulgarian, the main clause can be omitted if it expresses consent.

Te las tut ama na i tut grast '

(We are willing) to take you with us but you don't have a horse'.

Other instances of *te*-constructions can be considered as subordinate subjunctive clauses used without a main clause (the main clause being actually implied in the meaning).

Te avel sig!'(I want him) to come quickly!'



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A Complex Relationship: Menopause, Widowhood, and the Distribution of Power Among Older Rom Women

Lynette M. Nyman

This paper examines the social consequences of old age and the attainment of greater social purity for older Rom women. According to the ethnographic literature, older Rom women may gain secular and supernatural power in Rom society after they achieve the purity status. I show, however, that this is not inevitable for the older Rom women of "Białobrzeg" for whom old age potentially accords them social benefits denied younger women. Furthermore, many of my consultants conclude that old age and purity in no way compensate for the lack of financial stability, the poor health, the diminished youthful beauty, and the loneliness of the widow's lot. This discussion is based on ethnographic data collected during fieldwork conducted among Rom women in Poland during the summer of 1995, and on secondary sources.

When examining the social consequences of the purity and pollution belief complex within Rom¹ communities, anthropologists tend to emphasize either male authority and leadership (Kaminski 1980, 1987) or the social position and power of married women during their reproductive years (Anderson 1981, Okely 1975, Silverman 1981, Sutherland 1977). In this paper, instead, I explore the social consequences of old age and purity for the lives of post-reproductive Rom women. I argue that while older women in "Białobrzeg" gain secular and supernatural power as a consequence of the achievement of old age and purity, determinants other than female purity (i.e., freedom from menstrual restrictions) are important factors in constructing and deploying their power in the Rom community. Additionally, I seek

Lynette M. Nyman recently earned her Master's Degree in Anthropology at the University of Alabama with an emphasis on Rom culture and society in North America and Central/Eastern Europe. She is currently working for Alabama Public Radio, University of Alabama, Box 870370, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0370; e-mail lnyman@sa.ua.edu..



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to demonstrate that the older women may not perceive the social consequences of old age to be social benefits at all. To support these claims, I begin with a discussion of the concept of power followed by an account of the ethnographic literature on the social power of older women among the Roma, primarily in the United States and England. Lastly, I bring the ethnographic data from Białobrzeg to bear on these issues.

Once a thriving industrial town, Białobrzeg is slowly emerging as an urban center within Poland's new free-market economy. The Roma make up a small minority in this now largely ethnically homogeneous place. The Rom community in Białobrzeg is comprised of several different sub-groups or "nations," including those known as "Mountain Roma" and "Polska Roma." Most of the Roma arrived in Białobrzeg after World War II as a response to assimilation policy. As a result, several families came to Białobrzeg from western Poland in the early 1960s to work in a metal factory refinishing pots and pans. Soon thereafter the Roma established the Rom Association which was ostensibly a Rom political organization. However, the goals of the association were dictated by the government—to provide work and housing for the Roma, to send their children to school, and to preserve Rom folk traditions. Local Rom men and women formed entertainment groups under the auspices of the central government. The government gave money to a Polish program director who controlled and planned all their performances and activities. For many years public life in the Rom community revolved around the activities of the association and various music groups. Today they look less to these organizations for social and cultural guidance. The government support for folk groups and other cultural programs has diminished during Poland's economic transition.

Rom life in Białobrzeg centers around the household. A household generally consists of mother, father, and their children, but if the grandmother and grandfather are living then they are usually close by. Family members and friends attend funerals and cultural festivities such as the first communion ceremony. Family members also may help one another with money and food. Rom men might work as tinsmiths, musicians, and procurers of goods and services. In addition, the Rom men may receive government support for disability or retirement. Rom women often contribute financially to their households through unemployment payments, limited fortune-telling, and the sale of goods. The Roma also look to members outside of their immediate kin network for counsel and assistance. The person most valued for advice is the internal leader or "head man" (šero rom). He is perceived as the most deserving of respect in the Rom community given his sagacity and maleness. Additionally, there is the external leader who manages important matters with the local police and Polish authorities. His social power lies in his ability to read and write and in the fact that the Polish authorities recognize him as the legitimate representative of the Rom community.



In the summer of 1995, I spent two months in the urban setting of Białobrzeg observing the daily activities of a small Rom community and conducting ethnographic interviews with the women. My initial plan was to tape record life history discussions, but my consultants did not wish to be tape recorded. The women did allow me to take thorough notes; therefore, the women's statements in the latter portion of this paper are paraphrased quotations taken from my field notes. During the eight and a half week period in which I conducted fieldwork, I participated in extended discussions with seven women, four of whom were menopausal or postmenopausal (forty-five years of age or older). All but one of these older women were widows. Most of them had grandchildren or siblings with children and grandchildren. The three younger women were married and had children. Several of the discussions were with two women at one time, but most interviews were conducted without other people present. In mixed-gender company the women appeared to be reluctant to articulate their own opinions of Rom culture, but when alone they were more confident in the expression of their expertise.

Power, Menopause, and Widowhood

Power is a symbolic resource used by social actors to compel other individuals to do what they want them to do. This is especially true, Talcott Parsons writes "...where in case of recalcitrance there is a presumption of enforcement by negative situational sanctions—whatever the actual agency of that enforcement" (1967a:308). Authority is an extension of power in that a person in a particular status within a social system is imbued with the legitimate and culturally constructed right to make decisions binding not only to oneself, but on the collectivity as a whole (Parsons 1967a:320). Influence is another form of power whereby individuals seek to have an effect on the attitudes and opinions of others through deliberate action (Parsons 1967b: 356). In other words, influence is an attempt to persuade other persons that a behavior or act is good and desirable for themselves while at the same time seeking to obtain social benefits for oneself.

Women everywhere wield some form of power. Whether it is access to formal authority or to unassigned power depends on numerous factors such as the gender system of their society, the economic and political situation of their country, and their own personal life history and situation (Leacock 1986). Women in matricentric societies tend to wield considerable authority and influence, especially since the women, like the men, often own property and control economic resources. Widows among the Navajo, for example, may serve as the center of communication and organization (Lamphere 1974:101). A Navajo widow is generally the family head who is the most important decision-making body for domestic and public affairs. In Greek village society where the nuclear, bilateral family predominates,



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women have authority in the domestic sphere especially because they bring some economic resources to the family thus helping to balance the authority of men (Lamphere 1974:106). In rural China, women may contribute to the financial well-being of their households, but men generally control economic resources and hold considerable social authority. Women there use unassigned power in the form of persuasive strategies to influence men, especially their sons and other individuals in their uterine family (Judd 1994:188). Women who are not able to derive much power from the labor market may seek to create obligations or to gain power over one another through "kin work" (the conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of cross-household kin ties) (Di Leonardo 1987). In most cases, older women enjoy greater opportunity for achievement, fewer restrictions on behavior, and more authority among the women of their respective societies (Brown 1982).

It is the older woman who has social power whether or not she holds an official authority position. In some societies, an older woman's increase in prestige, authority, or autonomy cannot be understood as the result of biological or social changes associated with menopause; rather, a woman's elder status develops with an increase in responsibility for herself, for her kin and affines, and for the maintenance of society as a whole (Counts 1992). Yet, for many older women, the cessation of menstruation and the death of one's spouse are often significant factors which determine the degree to which a woman is granted power as a resource to accomplish her goals.

Germaine Greer (1992:41–42) claims that the climacteric (i.e., menopause) could be a sign of life rather than death in the Western industrial world, if there were some attendant social benefits such as seniority, rank, or respect. In a number of societies, the desire of men to have absolute control over reproduction is eliminated by the climacteric (Paige and Paige 1981:211). In other words, men relax their social grip on women when women can no longer reproduce. One would expect then to find older women to have greater freedom from the social restrictions placed on childbearing women in such societies. For example, post-menopausal women among the Havik Brahmin of southern India often perform the daily worship or puja for their families, a religious service usually restricted to men (Ullrich 1992:25). Among other peoples, supernatural powers are assigned to post-menopausal women. In the past, among the Oglala people of the North American Plains, postmenopausal women received supernatural power from visions or medicine men, therefore allowing them to participate in numerous rituals (Powers 1986:96). Postmenopausal Oglala women also were believed to enjoy curative powers and special knowledge. Among the Garífuna (Black Carib), the loss of female fertility marks an increase in female autonomy, social activity outside the household, ritual participation and political authority (Kerns 1983:192–193). From these ethnographic examples, it is clear that menopause may be a landmark event that brings about significant social changes in the lives of older women.



Widowhood often triggers a change in the social power of older women. A widow has a greater chance to achieve legitimate authority, especially if she holds the important position of the head of household or participates in local politics. Generally, the social consequences of widowhood—except in the case of mortuary rites—have not been thoroughly nor systematically investigated by anthropologists (Buitelaar 1995:3). The case of widows in India is one exception. Historians, anthropologists, and others have extensively documented the 19th century practice of suttee or "wife-burning" upon the death of a woman's husband. Although the specific ritual practices varied from caste to caste, the wife essentially had two choices. She could die on her husband's pyre, thereby becoming a sati (a "virtuous or faithful wife"), or she could choose the impure and ascetic life of widowhood (Van den Bosch 1995). Furthermore, the sati, but not the living widow, gained supernatural powers and, in some cases, became a sort of deity after her death. Today, Indian widows often find themselves in a state of abject poverty and desperation.

Often waiting at the Mylapore bus stop, which bordered one side of the Kapaleeswara tank, I'd see the widows dependent on the temple for sustenance. Their vacant perambulations around the tank perimeter in search of alms only dramatized blouseless arms and mud-brown saris draped carelessly over withered skin and shaved heads... (Visweswaran 1994:174–175).

In striking contrast to the fate of Indian widows, their counterparts in a French village are described as running their households, managing their farms and generally gaining independence from responsibilities that come with marriage (Rogers 1975:740). Sometimes the widowed women must help their grown children complete the daily chores of their own households. In general, widows' power relieves them from the control exerted over married women by men in many European peasant societies (Harding 1975:307). These few examples show that widowhood may or may not produce social benefits for older women.

Neither menopause nor widowhood are generally celebrated phenomena, like the first menses or the birth of a child. However, both menopause and widowhood are factors to be reckoned within the redistribution of female power. Of the two, menopause appears to have the most significant effects, especially in societies where a purity and pollution belief complex informs behavioral norms. Widowhood may be a resource or a social obstacle depending on the ethnographic context. Regardless of the underlying explanations, the achievement of old age across cultural lines may be interpreted as an important social benefit for older women in at least some societies. Clearly, failing to unravel the effects of menopause and widowhood masks the complexity of the relationship between old age and female power, as I shall seek to document in the case of Rom women.



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The Power of Older Rom Women

Anne Sutherland (1977:381) writes that among the Roma of "Barvale," California, the female and male incumbents of the *phuri* (old) age status have political power, receive more respect, and are less subject to pollution regulations. Among Mačwaya Roma in California, Carol Miller (1994) found that older women and men are perceived as lucky, successful, and wise. They embody "...a presumed lack of sexual appetite, the loss of reproductive potential, the unlikelihood of shame commission or thoughtless violence, and the easing of purity practices of containment" (Miller 1994:81). For example, an older woman may eat at the table with adult men and join in male conversations (Sutherland 1975:263; Silverman 1981:58). In Poland, write Andrzej Mirga and Lech Mroz (1994:138), an older woman may work independently from other women as a fortune-teller since she is no longer suspected of unfaithful or immodest behavior.

Many of these social consequences are significant social benefits normally denied Rom women of reproductive age. A number of ethnographic descriptions of old Rom women in North America and Europe record that they gain numerous social benefits, including an increase in secular and supernatural power, attributable to the old age and purity statuses.

Secular Power

Secular power for older women comes in several forms. They are, for example, regarded as the authoritative bearers of history. Mirga and Mroz describe the *phuri daj* as the oldest woman, who is usually regarded as the wisest and most essential to the community. She is the repository for the birth dates of children which are necessary for official records. The *phuri daj* is the storyteller as well (Mirga and Mroz 1994:129). Among the Roma in the United States, the oldest woman also serves as the authority on birth information necessary for official welfare documents (Sutherland 1975:108).² Older women have the freedom to openly express their opinions about others and have the benefits from rights denied younger women, such as smoking. Descriptions or images of older women smoking pipes or cigarettes are common in the ethnographic record (see Salo 1986, Ficowski 1990, or Gropper 1975:170).

Older women have more formal positions of authority, as well, often wielding considerable power within kin groups in the Rom community. In Philadelphia, Gülbün Çoker (1965:8) states that older widowed women typically serve as the heads of households. Similarly, old widowed women are powerful heads of households among Roma in the Balkans:



The widowed mother, even if her son, living with her in the same household, is full age and married, performs this function and not her adult son. She then has the authority to give orders to her sons, daughters-in-law, her own daughters and other members of the family. She is very respected by the people of her clan and her settlement (Vukanović 1961:90-91).

The old widowed woman may also be the head of an extended cognatic family group comprised of one or more households. In 1970, Sutherland (1975:41) found that four out of six Kashtare extended families in California were led by older women. Older women may also provide their names for kin category labels. That is, the kin category label vitsa, which designates the descendants of an ancestor among the Roma, may be derived from a female ancestor (Çoker 1966:87; Sutherland 1975:194). People may affiliate themselves with either their mother's or father's vitsa name.

Operating under the authority of the Rom jural body, the residential group, or *kumpania*, acts as the public monitor of moral, social, and political behavior (Sutherland 1975:33). It is composed of a number of households which may or may not be from the same *familiyi*. Although older women rarely are *kumpania* leaders, it is worth noting that a male *kumpania* leader lost much of his political power when his wife died (Sutherland 1975:39). In general, old widowed women are key players in the accumulation of political power by male relatives (Sutherland 1986:111). A son seeking to establish a strong leadership position needs the support of a mother who has a reputation for wielding supernatural power.

Supernatural Power

We have all heard of the *romni phuri*. There is always a woman to whom the Gypsies go for spiritual counseling. If they do something bad, or if they believe that they're possessed by the Devil or the demon, they go to this old lady that has practiced it all her life, and was taught from her life. And there are certain secret spiritual ceremonies performed that are not even shown to Gypsies (Megel 1986:4).

Scholars may disagree with parts of Megel's statement, but one thing is certain—older Rom women acquire supernatural power with age. Simply because of their longevity old women may be perceived as having a form of "superhuman" power (Gropper 1975:167), which they may deploy by threatening others with curses when they are displeased (Yoors 1987:24). Dreams are considered signs of the future by the Roma and among the Mānuš, a Gypsy group in France, but the dreams of older women are thought to be the most important and particularly powerful (Rao 1975:153). Carol Silverman similarly notes the perceptions held by Roma in America:



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If there is ever a dream or event to be interpreted, a curse to be uttered, a sickness to be diagnosed or cured, or a ritual to be enacted, a woman is the agent. If an old woman cures someone, it is more effective than if a man does. Women are seen as the repositories of supernatural power (1981:66).

Older women may be sought after for sagacious advice that only experience can provide. Most importantly, old women are believed to know the cures for illnesses (Rao 1975:143).

Shrecha, a powerful medicine woman (drabarni) among the Roma in California, harnesses the powers of the "little grandmother" or mamioro spirit and uses it to promote the well-being of her Rom community. Mamioro's vomit (johai), caused by the sight of filth, has the healing power to cure illnesses such as hemorrhages or epileptic convulsions. Sutherland's consultants describe Mamioro's vomit as "...a slimy yellow substance with red streaks (which are the blood of gaje), [that] can be scooped from the ground and baked with flour to produce a hard white rock from which tiny pieces are chipped for use" (1975:280). Shrecha carries pieces of johai in her bujo (medicine bag). She combines pieces of johai with herbs in small medicine bags made from her ancestresses' aprons which are wuzho (pure): "This bag of drab (medicine) is sewn into an unbaptized child's clothes to protect him from illness" (Sutherland 1975:281).

Anthropologists are in disagreement about whether a post-menopausal Rom woman retains the power to pollute a man with her skirt. Beginning with menstruation, a woman may defile a man's purity by tossing her skirts at him. The polluting power of the skirt is derived from its juxtaposition with the female's lower body and, therefore, association or contact with menstrual blood (Miller 1975:51). As a result, among Roma in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, older women lose the pollution power of their skirts because they no longer bear children nor do they menstruate (Miller 1975:44). In agreement with Miller, Rao (1975:150) writes that post-menopausal women among the Mānuš in France are no longer capable of polluting others although they themselves may be rendered unclean by others. Sutherland (1986:111), on the other hand, claims that older Rom women in California retain the power to lift their skirts at a man. She states that younger women rarely toss their skirts because they are under the authority of men, whereas older women have the freedom to retaliate with their skirts. These conflicting accounts suggest that there exists among the Roma some variation in the beliefs about the polluting power of an older woman's skirt.

The ethnographic literature clearly indicates that older women in a number of Rom communities possess secular and supernatural power. Much of the power of older women takes the form of authority. An old woman is the keeper of family history and an expert storyteller. Older widowed women may occupy positions of leadership in kin groups and, in some cases, in residential groups. Among the Roma,



supernatural power is a resource for authority for older women. Older women have and actively use to their advantage curative knowledge and the ability to curse others. In some Rom groups, older women retain the polluting power of their skirts which they can use against those men who do not conform to acceptable standards of behavior. Because they no longer reproduce, or menstruate, and are presumably sexually inactive, older Rom women have more power over their own behavior and life choices. In general, the literature suggests that old age and purity provide important social benefits for women, especially in the formation and implementation of female power.

The Power of Older Rom Women in Bialobrzeg

The old women of Białobrzeg, as is true of old Rom women in other countries, are granted more secular and supernatural power than their younger counterparts. The two most dominant factors in the social power of women are age and purity. Attaining culturally defined old age is perceived as a significant life achievement status which provides the bearer a resource for both authority and power. A number of cultural identifiers including age, grandmotherhood, menopause, and widowhood, work in combination to mark the transition to purity (Nyman 1996:62-64). The purity status is another source of empowerment, but the complex relationship between economics, reputation, widowhood, and other social conditions limits the power of many older women. Indeed, Sutherland (1977:381) points out that the purity and pollution beliefs interact in American Rom groups together with other circumstances including economics, political status, health, and well-being. In Białobrzeg, many of these factors cannot be overlooked in a discussion of the power of old women. Moreover, the perceptions and opinions of the old women with whom I spoke brings into question whether or not old age and purity may be accurately and justifiably interpreted as unambiguous social benefits.

Secular Power

Older women are granted several forms of secular power including authority over the younger Roma of Białobrzeg. For example, a child used the first name of a man and was verbally reprimanded in public by "Ludmila," a *phuri romni* (old woman). The child was admonished to address him with the respectful term of "uncle" (*kako* in the Romani language and *wujek* in Polish). Another *phuri romni*, "Beata," expressed dismay over what she perceives as recalcitrant behavior among the young Rom people:

The old people are not honored any more. The young people walk by without ever saying good-day. They sniff drugs. I never knew of such things when I grew up.



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This is not the culture of the Roma. Rom girls are wearing short skirts, going where the men go. These young people say they are Rom, but they do not have the culture.

In many cases, young people openly defy the behavioral standards championed by their elders. One afternoon a young *romni* (woman) whose husband is a Polish man approached a group of old women. The married woman had a new "bobbed" hair-cut and short jump-suit. One by one, the old women questioned this married woman about her appearance. They openly disagreed with her behavior, particularly expressing dismay with her new found curly hair, but she only shrugged her shoulders and turned to me, asking if I liked her new outfit and hair-do. Even in the face of such disregard for the wishes of old women, young people nevertheless assert that their elders have the last word in decision making. The power granted older women over the younger is an important resource for them.

"Hania," the most powerful older woman in Białobrzeg, uses her authority over the younger Roma as a persuasive strategy. Working through her son, who serves as the external liaison for the Rom community, she is able to increase the power and respect granted her by local Rom families. One morning Hania vehemently conveyed to her son her disapproval of the local Polish institution which controls government funding for many of the Rom cultural events in Białobrzeg. She made it clear to her son, and to those of us standing around the kitchen table, that he should have the most prominent position in the organization of such events. A few days later her son met with a representative of the institution. He reiterated a similar disapproval and dissatisfaction and demanded a stronger role in planning and policy. His successful action benefited Hania. She now had an additional public venue as a resource for power, especially over the Roma who attended the daily practice sessions of the local entertainment group.

Older women are often accorded authority when they succeed their deceased husbands. It is difficult to determine, however, the extent to which these positions are actual seats of extensive power. In the urban setting of Białobrzeg, the members of a family may live near one another, but their economic resources generally support their own households. From time to time, daughters-in-law may consult or cooperate with mothers-in-law in the pursuit of economic resources, but this does not seem to be any significant resource of power for old women. If possible, old women make small contributions to the households of their children who have separate households in town. For example, Hania buys clothes for her granddaughter while another old woman, "Bogusia," provides farm produce for her children and grandchildren. If old women have no children, as in the case of "Elżbieta" and Beata, then they have really no household to preside over.

Formal authority positions generally are occupied by men, including external and internal leadership statuses such as the "big" or "head" man position. One



consultant attributed the limited participation of older women in local politics to a lack of interest on their part. She states that in other towns women are more eager to take part in political or leadership activities. Interestingly, when important visitors come to town, Hania is the only older woman of Białobrzeg who participates in discussions with them, if called upon by her son to do so. Elżbieta, who traveled in a Rom caravan in her younger days and is considered something of an expert on Rom customs, argues that older women are active in the Rom jural body, although only the men may hold the position of šero rom (head man). She also states that participation in the decision making process of the kris (jury), is open to both sexes, young and old, as long as they are very wise.⁴

Supernatural Power

In Białobrzeg, the supernatural power of older women is evident, but without the salience found among other Rom communities. Dreams are considered significant signs of the future. One *romni* said that the images in dreams have important meanings. For example, she said that a dream with a vision of meat portends illness and an image of a baby suggests grief or worry. Interestingly, blood summons up a positive message of joy and happiness, except in the case of menstrual blood about which she did not elaborate. Among the women with whom I spoke, deference to the dreams of older women was not apparent. On one occasion, a *phuri romni* recounted a *suno* (dream) she had earlier that day in which her son appeared as a young boy. He cried and asked about his father who had died. Disturbed by her dream, the *phuri romni* went later that afternoon to visit her husband's grave in a nearby cemetery. Her daughter, who was listening to her mother's story, was unaffected by the events. She shrugged her shoulders and walked off to tend to other business. The supernatural power of dreams appears not to serve as a significant social resource of power for the old women of Białobrzeg.

The polluting power of the skirts of older women is also not a very potent source of influence or authority among the Roma of Białobrzeg. There is no indication among my consultants that older women can effectively use their skirts as power to regulate the comportment of Rom men. One married Rom man asserted that an old woman's skirt is very unclean, specifically citing how the underside of a woman's skirt endangers male purity. In his opinion, the skirts of old women must still be washed separate from men's clothing. His mother, an old widowed woman, continues to be cautious and to wash her clothes separately from those of another son who lives with her. Whether or not she seeks to be modest in displaying her purity, she was adamant that as an old widowed woman she is not magerdo (unclean).



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There is evidence that older women have curative knowledge, but not the ability to use this knowledge as a source of power. One *romni* told me that an old woman has done everything in life. She knows how to cure illnesses and to give good advice, especially on child care. One afternoon, a young *romni* mother complained about her child, who would not eat breakfast. The *phuri romni* sitting next to us gave her suggestions about feeding her child. "The child must have breakfast," she said. She then went on to tell a story about the problems she had feeding her own children. When I questioned this same old woman, she admitted coral is good for one's health, especially for the eyes.

Older women themselves are dependent on outsiders for cures for their own illnesses, even though they tend to refuse treatment from Polish doctors except when absolutely necessary. Elżbieta said that her condition is unbearable since her sister returned to Poland from Germany, thus cutting off her access to German medicine. She claims that Polish medicine is substandard. Bogusia, on the other hand, follows the advice of a Polish neighbor who told her about herbal treatment for her legs. She regularly collects the necessary grasses and herbs and then boils them in her magerdo pot on the stove. Even the independent Hania was seduced by my Ricola throat lozenges which she had never seen before. Certainly, the age and experience of older women makes them likely candidates for repositories of supernatural power. Generally speaking, however, the Roma seek the assistance of non-Roma to cure their illnesses, a factor which may have a role in the loss of curative knowledge as power for older women.

Other Considerations

Additional factors limit the power of older women. One important determination of the power of an older woman is the social position of her family in the wider social hierarchy of the Roma. The Rom community in Białobrzeg is comprised of several different sub-groups or "nations," some of which are not held in high esteem by all of the old Rom women. Specifically, the older women who claim to be Polska Roma look down on those they believe to be Mountain Roma. For example, "Joanna," an older widowed woman, traces her ancestry to a Polska Roma family purported to be the only Rom family living in Białobrzeg before the implementation of the post-World War II forced settlement. She openly expresses insolence towards many of the other Roma, including Hania. Joanna said she does not associate with the Mountain Roma. "We say 'good-day,' but that is it. I know only 'clean' Roma." She limits herself to frequent visits with another older woman married to her cousin, whereas most of the other Roma congregate with one another on a daily basis. Yet, Joanna herself was called "no good" by Ludmila.

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Ludmila also disdains those persons she perceives to be Mountain Roma. On one occasion she jokingly told me to tell the other Roma in town that she was planning a birthday party for me. "Tell them I am serving horse and dog meat," she said laughingly. The Mountain Roma are often accused of uncleanliness because other Roma think they feast on the forbidden meat of the horse and dog. Ludmila claims to be of the regional Rom group referred to as the "Galicjaki." She depends on the help of Hania's son to arrange her personal matters with the local authorities. Joanna, on the other hand, takes care of her own affairs and does not participate in any of the local Rom cultural activities. She adamantly asserts that she does not need the assistance of Hania or her son at all.

Wealth is another factor which contributes to the social power of older women because wealth, of course, is itself a form of power. Bogusia refused to ask Hania's family for money even though she was desperate. She said, "They will not lend anyone money. They tell people they do not have any." She wanted to know if I had been to Hania's home: "Does she have new furniture?" She complained that Hania is out all the time visiting her children or going on trips while she, on the other hand, has too much work to do. However, Bogusia does travel alone to nearby villages to trade used clothing for fresh farm produce. She also receives her deceased husband's pension, but as she made clear, she is not in the "first group" like Hania. She planned to ask for assistance from the "head man," who is considered the most powerful internal leader of the Roma in Białobrzeg. She was sure he would help her, but she ended up pawning some of her jewelry for two million złoty (about eighty American dollars) which is more than a month's rent for her. Although Hania claims that she too is limited financially, her carefree behavior suggests that her financial worries are not nearly as great as those of Bogusia, who correspondingly is granted less power and respect in the Rom community.

The impecunious condition of older women is often distorted by the appearance of wealth, especially in the form of coral and gold jewelry. It is important for others to know that the coral necklaces are "real" coral. The strands of beads often have Catholic religious icons attached. Before making a public appearance, one of the oldest widowed woman, Elżbieta, put on her numerous gold rings each with an enormous piece of coral. She also wore her earrings with coral stones and a long necklace with coral beads. When I asked her why she wore coral she responded by saying it is "rich." I mentioned to her that I priced similar pieces in town a few kilometers away. "How much did they cost?" she asked. She was pleased to learn that coral and gold is very expensive in the Polish shops, some as high as eight million złoty (about 320 American dollars). Even so, Elżbieta is not a "wealthy" woman. As a matter of fact, she has just enough money to subsist and to live in one of the poorest neighborhoods in all of Białobrzeg, a neighborhood



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avoided by Poles and Roma alike. Hania, for example, refused to go there with me to arrange meetings for my research. Yet, Elżbieta is one of two older women whose power is recognized by the leading family. In moments of conflict, Hania willingly acquiesces to the desires of Elżbieta. Hania responds similarly to "Zofie," presumably the oldest Rom woman in town. Zofie's ill health limits her public life, but she is sought after and valued for her knowledge of Rom history.

Reputation is another factor contributing to the social power granted older women. A woman may occupy the *phuri romni* status, but she may lack power and respect if her children and grandchildren are suspected or guilty of ignominious acts. A most important factor affecting the reputation of an older woman is the behavior of her son. If a woman's son drinks or frequents prostitutes then her own reputation for cleanliness is at serious risk. One particularly vivid case that came to my attention was that of an old woman who was frantic about the drunken behavior of her adult son. She constantly worried about the possibility of his participation in licentious behavior and feared he would bring a prostitute to her home. This would have rendered her own apartment *magerdo*. In her opinion, if people knew of his indolent approach to personal cleanliness, his already precarious reputation certainly would be ruined:

He should care for himself, but he does not do anything around the house. His room is dirty, his clothes are dirty, he has a dirty bed. I will not clean his room, iron or wash his clothes. If the others came and saw the way he lived, they would call him *magerdo*. Then he would not be able to eat or drink with any Roma around here, but what is the point, he has nowhere to go.

Generally, chronic drinking is frowned upon within the Rom community, but it is tolerated much like drinking is within the wider Polish society. Even the son of one prominent older woman is not free from suspicion. Several of the older women commented that they think he is having an affair: "No one will accuse him of this," said Ludmila, "because we are not in the room to see with our own eyes." In short, the behavior of an old woman's children (especially that of her son) threatens her reputation or purity, thereby possibly constricting her power in the Rom community.

Perceptions of Old Age

Based on their own experiences, the older women of Białobrzeg hold diverse and compelling opinions about the achievement of old age. Their varying perspectives, however, tend to have one thing in common: the net effects of the social consequences of old age, especially widowhood, are not necessarily social benefits for every Rom woman. Their observations on the vicissitudes of aging disabuses one of the notion that the life of older Rom women is best characterized by the enjoyment of freedoms



denied younger Rom women. Issues of economics, sex, and health are factors which clearly figure into their various complaints of old age.

Older widowed women are free to travel or "go out" if they wish, unlike the younger Rom women who must tend to their husbands. Hania, for example, likes to spend her days about town. She often strolls along the main shopping streets, visits her children, or goes with her son on business trips. Hania is well aware, however, that she is a unique case among the older women of Białobrzeg. "I can't stay home and sit all day. I want to go out. Old women do what old people do everywhere—sit on their asses." In her opinion, she still has obligations that restrict her freedom to go out, even if she is a widow:

There is no real difference between my life as a *romni* and *phuri romni*. I have to be home for things, cooking, cleaning, ironing even though my husband is not alive. I have a guest from Ukraine. I have to do all the cooking for him...breakfast, lunch, and dinner. This is why I am not out much lately.

Among the older women of Białobrzeg, only Hania is able to take advantage of the potential for greater freedom because she has exceptionally good economic resources and enjoys good health. The other older widowed women invariably complained that they did not have any money.

Older widowed women gain purity and freedom denied younger women, but they generally do not benefit from adequate financial resources, especially if they depend solely on the small pensions of their deceased husbands for survival. One afternoon, Elżbieta and Ludmila joked about finding a second husband just for the financial gain. Bogusia is particularly anxious over her present financial condition:

My husband died fifteen years ago. Life was better when he was alive because he had money. When he was alive we had 'rich' name-day parties. [She spoke as she gathered some used clothes and put them in a duffel bag in preparation for her nearly daily trip to a nearby village]. Women can do nothing when they are angry at their husbands, but life is better with them than without.⁸

In Beata's opinion, the tenuous financial situation of the older women of the community is a recent phenomenon. She argues that in the past, at least among the Polska Roma, the women made most of the money, although the men contributed as well. Today, women are more dependent on men than ever before because for many women fortune-telling as a viable means for sustenance has declined, thus reducing their economic and social position. ⁹

In the view of my consultants, the restrictions on sexual activity for older widowed women is unfortunate. Elżbieta thinks that a husband is worth having not just for the money, but for the sex too. "It was better when my husband was living. You can 'sleep' with a husband." But older widowed women who attempt to find



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men to fulfill their sexual desires understand that they threaten their reputation and purity by doing so. Old Beata, whose husband is still living, poignantly states her opinion on this issue. "Widows should not have second husbands or lovers. Lovers are for 'whores' who do not have any honor. For men it is another story." During a casual discussion, Joanna intimated that she would like to have an older male friend. Then she would have someone to have dinner with and accompany her shopping. Beata scoffed at such a suggestion. For her there is only one path. "There isn't a second life for me. One of us will die, then the other. I have my place there. My place is waiting for me there," she said while pointing her finger to the sky.

A few of the older women complained that old age is far from being the best time of a woman's life, if for no other reason than because of the loss of youthful health and beauty. Freedom from disease is considered not only important for life, but also is a sign of good luck. Joanna described an old woman as one who is big and fat. "Someone like Beata," she said with a hearty laugh, as Beata chuckled along with her. Beata agreed with Joanna's assessment. "It is better to be a young woman because young women are pretty and have their teeth." Additionally, Beata spends most of her free time caring for her husband who is ill. Beata herself must take medicine regularly for her heart and must adhere to a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet. For Beata, the lack of a salubrious condition confines her life. "Health is the most important for a good life. If not, then you need someone to feed you, to give you water. What do you do without health? If you have health, then you have baxt [luck]." Without good health, the older women find themselves at or near their homes, effectively prevented from enjoying the freedoms granted older women.

Conclusion

Older women throughout the world experience greater autonomy, authority, and freedom than younger women. Older women often hold formal positions of authority, participate in religious rituals, and acquire supernatural powers. For some older women, the achievement of old age and its concomitant changes such as the end of menstruation and the often associated condition of pollution becomes a source of social power. As widows, older women have greater access to authority than women whose husbands are living, but older women may depend on their ability to influence the actions of others through informal means. Still, older women generally are not granted the same degree of power and authority attributed to men. As such, older Rom women are similar to their counterparts in other societies.

The ethnographic literature demonstrates that older Rom women in the United States do in fact wield considerable legitimate and unassigned power. They are heads of large extended households, leaders of residential non-kin groups, and procurers of medicinal remedies. In Białobrzeg, one finds a somewhat different



situation. While older women are granted power over the younger and their dreams are perceived by others as powerful signs, social circumstances greatly influence whether old age serves as a resource or an obstacle to the realization of power. Position in the Rom social hierarchy of "nations," economic status, and social reputation are all factors which mitigate the extent to which older women acquire and enforce power in the Rom community of Białobrzeg. Poor older women bereft of power in any meaningful sense, are openly critical of their counterparts who have stable economic situations—and more power—than themselves. Additionally, all of the older women, regardless of financial or social position, articulate a feeling of discontent and frustration over the debilities of old age and the loneliness of widowhood.

For the Rom women of Białobrzeg, old age potentially accords them important social benefits denied younger women, yet only a few older women have the resources to take advantage of them. An older woman has the freedom to go where she pleases, but she may lack the money or health to do so. She remains responsible for the maintenance of her own home, unless she is extremely ill, therefore requiring assistance from other family members. If she fulfills her desire for sexual activity with a man, she risks the loss of her reputation and purity. Thus, the laments of these old women leave one hard pressed to conclude that the achievement of old age and purity is an unequivocal social benefit. Clearly, these findings call for further research into the area of female power, especially for older women in different Rom communities.

Notes

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¹ In this paper I conform to the usage of "Rom" (singular noun and adjective) and "Roma" (plural noun) since it is the term utilized by my Rom consultants in their community. The name of the town "Białobrzeg" (pronounced bee-ah-wo-bzheg; zh in azure) and the names for the Rom women of Białobrzeg are pseudonyms in an effort to maintain confidentiality for my Rom consultants.

² Sutherland is skeptical about the accuracy of this information. "Stevan and other *phuria* advise new families on how to obtain welfare quickly...how to obtain



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the necessary documents. Birth certificates, for example, are usually provided by having some old lady make a midwife's statement. ... Even if she were the actual midwife (and one local *phuri* seems to have delivered a large number of babies), it is very unlikely that she would remember the date; however, the welfare department is required to accept a midwife's affidavit" (1975:108).

- ³ A similar spirit exists in the traditional belief systems of the Kelderasze Roma and Lowara Roma in Poland and is also found in the Balkans (Ficowski 1985:286-287).
- ⁴ During my fieldwork, I was not able to explore further the role of women in the *kris*. An anonymous reader of this article, however, noted women are active decision-makers in the *kris* only when a woman is party to the dispute.
- ⁵ I do not presume to have all of the relevant data on this topic nor do I wish to create a hierarchical classification of Rom families in Białobrzeg. Rather, I allude to the statements of the women to illustrate that the disregard or lack of respect for others diminishes the potential for effective power among the Roma.
- ⁶ In Poland's pension system, people who are assigned to the "first group" receive more money than those who are in the "second group," and so forth.
- ⁷ Kaminski (1980:293) found a similar situation among other Roma in Poland wherein one Rom mother-in-law was worried about one of her sons who was a drinker because he already had been temporarily polluted.
- * A "name day" is the celebration of one's first name. The various first names used by Poles and Roma correspond with the Catholic calendar in Poland where each day has a designated name assigned to it.
- ⁹ Beata did not provide more detail on this issue. However, Miller writes about a similar situation among the Mačwaya Roma in the United States: "Mačwaya women are expected to bear, raise and support the children, as well as furnish the husband with a 'good living,' although recent circumstances curtailing fortune telling have forced men to seek employment" (1968:39).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Das Romani von Ajia Varvara: Deskriptive und Historisch-vergleichende Darstellung eines Zigeunerdialekts. Birgit Igla. Osteuropa-Institut der Freien Universität Berlin, Balkanologische Veröffentlichungen, Vol. 29. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996. 313 pp. DM 128 (paper). ISBN 3-447-03807-1.

Gordon M. Messing

Birgit Igla has become one of the leading scholars doing significant research on the various Romani dialects. Her scholarly achievement in the present large and very thorough treatment of the Romani dialect spoken in Agia Varvara will deservedly add to her reputation. Agia Varvara is a relatively poor suburb of Athens which is home to about 500 Gypsy families. There are Greeks as well as Gypsies who dwell in this community, and to earn their living Gypsies must be bilingual in Romani and Greek. Birgit Igla paid two visits here. The first was an exploratory mission to make initial contact with speakers of Romani. Her second visit to record her data took place about a year later, from October 1986 to March 1987. In her preface, written in Sofia, dated November 1995, Igla offers special thanks to her mentor and learned collaborator, Norbert Boretzky, who initiated her into Romani studies. It is clear that Igla's range in Romani studies has profited greatly from this collaboration. I am thinking particularly of their joint dictionary, Wörterbuch Romani-Deutsch-Englisch für den südosteuropäischen Raum (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), since this enabled her to cite examples from a number of Romani dialects. She is now in a position to quote parallel forms not only from Boretzky's published collections but also from his as yet unpublished materials; even an unpublished comment of Boretzky's, a Romani feature also found in Armenian, is reported by Igla in footnote 5, page 28.

The structure of this grammar is governed by Igla's particular needs. A short introductory section (pp. 5-22) sorts out the sounds of this dialect. A section on morphology (pp. 23-81) discusses *inter alia* one of the features of the Agia Varvara dialect which has excited particular comment: There are perhaps three dozen verbs

Gordon M. Messing is Emeritus Professor of Classics and Linguistics at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.



borrowed from Turkish; still more remarkable, these verbs, conjugated in a present and a past tense. have preserved a Turkish set of endings. The next large section (pp. 83-146) is entitled "Grammatical Categories," and it is followed by another section entitled "Syntax" (pp. 147-186). This is followed by a good-sized section dedicated to "Diachrony" (pp. 187-249). Note that this section, like the two preceding it, operates with a number of short model sentences in the dialect of Agia Varvara chosen to illustrate points at issue in the general grammatical formulation. (I shall explain some of these in a moment.) Next comes a generous selection of texts in this same dialect (pp. 251-275) with a good glossary in German (pp. 277-305). A short bibliography (pp. 307-313) concludes the monograph.

Although a small part of the data included in the three more extensive sections just mentioned repeats what has been said elsewhere, Igla clearly intends these sections as genuine supplements to her grammar. Let me sample some of this discussion.

One normal device for specifying a given noun or noun phrase is by a definite article used with it. This does not always hold. Take the Romani sentence in paragraph 3.1.1.1 (page 84): ekh drom geli ekh romni ka o $ma(\gamma)azi$ ta lel káti manginá, 'once a woman came to the store to buy goods'. Igla explains that the definite article is used here with "store." Although this noun has not been previously identified, the speaker assumes that his interlocutor will understand which store is being singled out, perhaps one where he is employed. In American English we have a usage which is similar but not quite the same. We can say, "She was in such pain that she decided to stay overnight in the hospital." Which hospital? If our setting is Ithaca, New York, there is only one public hospital to choose from; in New York City several might be so designated (and perhaps a specific identity is not really required).

Here is another shift in the usual construction, a departure from action described in a past tense by a verb in present tense (historical present). A sentence offered as paragraph 3.2.1.1.2 (8) goes as follows: matilém, gelém me pheása ek, mólis dikhlé man phenáv, 'I was drunk, I went along with my sister; as soon as they saw me I say...'. The effect is again in vividness.

Greek prepositions are frequently employed in Romani texts. When that occurs, the speaker must decide what case such a preposition must govern in the Romani text. This illustrative sentence is numbered paragraph 1.(5) on page 242, Mipos páli bleksáylan me tu Kunélu tin čhej? 'Have you gotten mixed up again with the daughter of Kunelos?

I could and perhaps I should furnish still more examples of Igla's use of model sentences employing phraseology taken directly from the dialect of Agia Varvara. With considerable finesse she tries for each point to supply a number of apt illustrations.



Do these sometimes rather theoretical considerations interfere with as well as supplement the grammar? Not at all. Igla keeps her gaze firmly fixed on the implications of her grammar. For example, if she tells us that most masculine nouns with a stem ending in a consonant like *Rom*, 'man, Gypsy' can form a vocative singular in two different ways, either *romá* or *romeá*, she hastens to point out that some quite common nouns have only one vocative, e.g. from *del* 'god, God' (stem contracted from *devel*) the only vocative is *devlá*.

To a problem in the phonology of the dialect of Agia Varvara which has provoked much speculation, Igla proposes a simple and plausible explanation. The problem is the coexistence of two forms identical in meaning and formation but distinguished by a metathesis. Thus anro 'egg' corresponds to arno 'egg', manro and marno both mean 'bread'; a list of such duplicates is given on pages 3-4. Igla attributes this difference by metathesis to a difference in the phonological usage of two otherwise closely similar clans. The result was these pairs of words differing only by metathesis. Younger speakers know both forms of a given pair and their perplexity concerns only their effort to determine which is proper to their own dialect.

As I noted above, this is a large and complicated grammar. I presume that its very bulk limited additional indexing. Perhaps I am being too demanding, but I suspect that I am not the only reader who would have appreciated an index of the Romani words commented upon separately in the text and footnotes. Furthermore, so much meaty discussion is crammed into the footnotes that I should also have welcomed an index of scholars cited here.

I am particularly attracted to this elaborate Romani grammar of Igla's because of a personal linkage. While I am not at all in the league of scholars to which Birgit Igla rightly belongs. it happens that I did some years ago venture into the same arena. I was introduced to two Gypsy families in Agia Varvara and collected data there for a glossary of the Romani dialect. My wife, Florence Hope Messing, typed up successive versions of this glossary, eventually putting it on computer disks from which it was finally printed (A Glossary of Greek Romany as Spoken in Agia Varvara [Athens], Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1988). When Igla came across my name in a Romani connection, she wrote to me explaining her own Romani interests. Later, when my wife and I attended a symposium on Romani held in Amsterdam, our paths crossed. I hope the present copious Romani grammar is a harbinger of further outstanding research in Romani.



Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria. Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997. Studien zur Tsiganologie und Folkloristik, Vol. 18. 216 pp. DM 65; US\$42.95 (paper). ISBN 3-631-30759-4.

Carol Silverman

Scholars interested in Balkan Roma and Roma in general should welcome the publication of Gypsies (Roma) of Bulgaria, which is a slightly expanded English translation of the authors' 1993 Bulgarian book, Tsiganite v Bulgaria (Sofia: Club'90, funded by the Project on Ethnic Relations, Princeton, New Jersey). Marushiakova and Popov have boldly synthesized a wide array of materials dealing with history, classification of groups, economics, religion and folk belief, social structure, ritual, law, and relations with non-Rom Bulgarians. The seventeenpage bibliography alone is worth the steep price of the book, for it is an extremely valuable guide to the past and present literature on Bulgarian Roma, including archival materials. The translation is very readable, despite a few grammatical and bibliographic errors.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov are scholars at the Institute of Ethnography of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. They have been doing research on Bulgarian Roma for about twenty years, but were not allowed to publish their work in Bulgaria during the communist era due to the government policy of denying the existence of minority ethnic groups. Marushiakova, born in Slovakia, worked with Slovak Roma in the 1970s and published a number of articles in Slovak journals. Since 1991 the authors (jointly and separately) have been publishing a steady stream of articles on Bulgarian Roma in Bulgarian and international journals. In 1995 the authors produced the first museum exhibition and catalogue on Bulgarian Roma, with funding from the Council of Europe. In addition, with the help of the Soros foundation, they edited and published a two volume collection of Bulgarian Rom historical and ethnographic materials entitled *Studii Romani* (1994 and 1995).

I have the highest regard for Marushiakova's and Popov's stamina and devotion to Roma studies and the professional level of their research. They have been staunch advocates of Roma in the highly political and racist Bulgarian context. They have often fought petty bureaucrats, highly-placed government officials, uninformed journalists, and their own colleagues on issues of Rom human rights. They have spoken out against prejudice in the media, in the education system, and especially against tracking Rom children into certain professions and away from

Carol Silverman is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Folklore, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, USA.



higher academic learning. Through the Minority Studies Society which they founded, they have managed to support their research through international grants. At a time when many academic researchers in Bulgaria are demoralized and slowing down because of low pay or lack of pay, Marushiakova and Popov are an energetic exception. Trained in East European methods of ethnography, Marushiakova and Popov are especially precise when describing, comparing, and classifying Rom groups and in relating history to the current ethnographic milieu.

The Introduction of the present work is an excellent review of the literature, discussing foreign as well as native researchers, nineteenth century travelers, and contemporary comparative sociologists, and providing candid assessments of the value (or lack of value) of the works considered. Chapter One, History of the Gypsies in Bulgarian Lands, is much broader than the title implies, covering not only Bulgaria, but also the larger issue of the Rom Diaspora from India, names of the Roma, and specifically Roma in the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. Comparisons are often noted, such as that Balkan Ottoman Roma seem far better off than their west European brethren. Marushiakova and Popov also deal with the Bulgarian czarist period and World War II, but spend more time analyzing the attempted assimilation of Roma during the socialist period. They bring to light valuable data from secret censuses and Communist Party documents. There is a very useful discussion of the reasons why many Bulgarian Roma identity as Turks. The postcommunist period is discussed briefly in the last chapter, but the complicated politics of this period are not addressed.

Chapter Two, Gypsies in Bulgaria, has four subsections: 1) ethnic characteristics, 2) ethnic names and ethnic self consciousness, 3) classification, and 4) geographical distribution. This is the most theoretical and, to me, the most controversial chapter in that it describes the fourteen characteristics of a "typical, ideal Gypsy group" (p.57), including common occupation, common potestary structure (internal mechanisms of law), and strict observance of maxrime prohibitions. The authors use this model to distinguish each Gypsy group from others, and through this method they clearly describe and distinguish a large array of Bulgarian groups, nomadic and sedentary, Christian and Muslim, and Romany, Turkish, and Bulgarian speaking. They point out that misguided generalizations in the literature are the result of studies that are too narrow (e.g, based on only one or two groups), not historical, and not comparative. These are excellent points that all researchers should keep in mind.

The controversy emerges, however, when Marushiakova and Popov employ terminology based on hierarchy: "Evidently, the group which possesses the full number of characteristic elements will appear at the top of the hierarchy" (p.58). They also analyze Gypsy ethnicity in an evolutionary framework which seems to be drawn from the Russian ethnographer Y. Bromlei: "What are the circumstances



that prevented them...from achieving a higher level in their development as an ethnic community (i.e., the stage of relatively homogeneous communities like the nation.)" (p.48). I wonder if this preoccupation with hierarchy, which has been almost abandoned in Western ethnography, is a reflection of East European social science or the preoccupation of Roma themselves? True, Roma always compare and contrast, especially when marriage looms. The authors delicately explicate the complex and sometimes shifting levels of identity for each group, somewhat contradicting their point about hierarchy. Their chart on page 77 is a useful guide to the numerous groups; the meta-levels sketched give the reader an insightful means of conceptualizing larger and more encompassing levels of ethnicity. The authors deserve our highest praise for their thoroughness; in difficult conditions, they have worked with each and every Gypsy group in Bulgaria and investigated how they intersect historically, economically, and culturally.

Chapter Threee, Ethnocultural Characterization of the Gypsies in Bulgaria, has six sub-sections: 1) way of life and traditional occupations, 2) religion,3) calendar festivals and holidays, 4) family customs and rites, 5) potestary institutions and forms of self-government, and 6) general characteristics. This chapter is extremely rich in ethnographic detail and is obviously based on long-term fieldwork and careful assessment of archival materials. I wished for more material on music and dance, but the authors do not pretend to be specialists in the area. The comments describing the revival of nomadism among certain groups since 1989 are extremely interesting, and underline the ever-changing profile of Rom culture. The authors' point about syncretism and adaptability of Roma is well documented, but it would help the reader to know precisely which customs are shared by the surrounding populace and which are not. Similarly, when terminology is given it would help to know in what language the term occurs. Scholars of the Balkans might not have this problem, but others might.

In sum, Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria is a very valuable contribution to the scholarly literature. The authors' estimate of the Rom population of 7-8000,000 "makes Bulgaria the country with the highest proportion of Gypsies" (p.44), a claim making Bulgaria a country worth the attention of all scholars. The book is thorough, meticulous in detail, and bold in comparative analysis. It is not, however, easy reading and was neither written to give the flavor of Rom life nor the voice of individuals. Rather, it is a social scientific investigation into social structure, history, and classification; in this, it is superb.



Returning to A. Dorien Ross. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995. 175 pp. \$9.95 (paper). ISBN 087286-307-7.

Terrance Fitz-Henry

Reading a book profoundly is to return to it again and again, to judge and consider it, and if it is a great book appreciation will deepen on each return. Returning to A is such a book, but I do not read it, I live through it, and mourn and sigh and cry "ole."

This novel is many things, as it its title. It is the story of a young American woman with long black hair and a guitar, convinced that the Gypsies knew the language of her spirit. That conviction takes her to Andalusia to study flamenco. And the climax comes when Loren plays a siguiriya suffused with duende, the chthonic spirits of cante jondo, deep song. Her mentor Ansonini calls the performance un cuervo blanco.

"We see the raven who is white, we only see it once.... She flies before us throughout our lives, though there are many who never see her. Never see her at all. She shows us we can fly blind and with no wings, when the song that is ours is upon us. Your song is *siguiriyas*. Study it every day. Learn its every variation. And this, *nifta*, this will carry you through the rest of your life. De verdad." The truth (p. 140).

And it is the truth. For this book is a song of weeping, a fateful vision of our laboring toward freedom. As a whole it is a dark lament for all that passes, a mournful melody shot through with flashes of alegria, of love, and present happiness.

Returning to A is returning to A from B-flat in the Phrygian mode, returning to Andalusia, returning to America and returning to Aaron, Loren's beloved brother. His early death begins an extended lament only resolved at the end, with the return of tenderness.

There are many tantalizing observations on playing flamenco and insights to Gypsy life.

The rhythmic frame is defined and solemn, as Loren describes her own playing on the morning that opens the book. Freedom is our fatality. Of Diego del Gastor, the great flamenco artist, she says, "To leave us alone and to our own devices. Your music holds us in its arms, and we begin to enjoy dying" (p. 3). "Diego's thumb anchored our shifting existence" (p. 4).

Sentences and paragraphs are so sure of their vitality that they can risk death and, as Lorca said, only then does the duende arrive, and miracles of metamorphosis.

Terrance Fitz-Henry is a professor of English Literature at Hartwick College, Oneonta, NY 13820. He has lived in Andalusia, translating Lorca's "Un Gente con el Corazon en la Cabeza."



John G. Neihardt said poetry occurs where two states of consciousness, waking and dream, meet and describe one another. At such moments we cry "ole." There are many such moments in *Returning to A*. Time and place shift easily, and the spirit leaps.

Describing a great American guitar repairman, Ross tells us, "He is taking great care of the Santos. He only works on it when the humidity falls below 55 percent or at night. He dreams of walking through its inner archways as he once strolled through the mazes of the Alhambra with its tinkling fountains of silver water and scent of lemon air" (p. 89). This and its unusual rhythm in the belly of a guitar!

Such beauties in the book vie with its ancient wisdom, as when Loren understands the profundity of alegrías which she had thought trivial, light, and not worthy of her efforts. "It was then I knew that alegrías can be heard for what it is only by young people with old souls or old people with the souls of children. A genetic Gypsy characteristic" (p. 12).

And then there are sudden moments of heart wrenching confession, not grievous but deep, delivered with intensity. "Intensity was a quality that the Gypsies equate with seriousness." From the middle of the book is a paragraph of lament and confession that is cante jondo.

It's funny the way the hand begins to move. Just three years ago, it seemed the guitar was lost to me forever, like Manuel, like my childhood. I don't know if this dramatic reversal, this turn toward bitterness, this falling out of grace—out of compás, if you will—if this occurs in other passions. I've heard stories enough of the disenchanted. I never shun these people. It would be the same as shunning myself. For there is a part of me always ready to fall out of compás. I fall in and out daily (p. 96).

Or this: "The waves pulled back over the small pebbles every night. Over and over the sound of small pebbles tumbling backward into the sea. Strange how we start with death and move backward into life" (p. 21).

This book, like Manuel's dancing out the play of death at its end, "is an event of complete originality."

Almost all of the Spanish is translated. There is a brief glossary, and I found only five typos.



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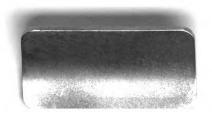
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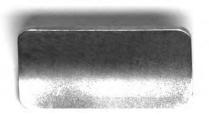










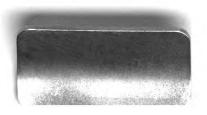














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